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A LIFE OF WALT WHITMAN

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TO

MY MOTHER

AND

HER MOTHER

THE REPUBLIC

PREFACE

To the reader, and especially to the critical reader, it would seem but courteous to give at the beginning of my book some indication of its purpose. It makes no attempt to fill the place either of a critical study or a definitive biography. Though Whitman died thirteen years ago, the time has not yet come for a final and complete life to be written; and when the hour shall arrive we must, I think, look to some American interpreter for the volume. For Whitman's life is of a strongly American flavour. Instead of such a book I offer a biographical study from the point of view of an Englishman, yet of an Englishman who loves the Republic. I have not attempted, except parenthetically here and there, to make literary decisions on the value of Whitman's work, partly because he still remains an innovator upon whose case the jury of the years must decide—a jury which is not yet complete; and partly because I am not myself a literary critic. It is as a man that I see and have sought to describe Whitman. But as a man of special and exceptional character, a new type of mystic or seer. And

the conviction that he belongs to the order of initiates has dragged me on to confessedly difficult ground.

Again, while seeking to avoid excursions into literary criticism, it has seemed to me to be impossible to draw a real portrait of the man without attempting some interpretation of his books and the quotation from them of characteristic passages, for they are the record of his personal attitude towards the problems most intimately affecting his life. I trust that this part of my work may at any rate offer some suggestions to the serious student of Whitman. Since he touched life at many points, it has been full of pitfalls; and if among them I should prove but a blind leader, I can only hope that those who follow will keep open eyes.

Whitman has made his biography the more difficult to write by demanding that he should be studied in relation to his time; to fulfil this requirement was beyond my scope, but I have here and there suggested the more notable outlines, within which the reader will supply details from his own memory. As I have written especially for my own countrymen, I have ventured to remind the reader of some of those elementary facts of American history of which we English are too easily forgetful.

The most important chapters of Whitman's life have been written by himself, and will be found scattered over his complete works. To these the following pages are intended as a modest supplement and commentary. Already

The Whitman literature has become extensive, but, save in brief sketches, no picture of his whole life in which one may trace with any detail the process of its development seems as yet to exist. In this country the only competent studies which have appeared are that of the late Mr. Symonds, which devotes some twenty pages to biographical matters, and the admirable and suggestive little manual of the late Mr. William Clarke. Both books are some twelve years old, and in those years not a little new material has become available, notably that which is collected in the ten-volume edition of Whitman's works, and in the book known as *In re Walt Whitman*. On these and on essays printed in the *Conservator* and in the *Whitman Fellowship Papers* I have freely drawn for the following pages.

Of American studies the late Dr. Bucke's still, after twenty years, easily holds the first place. Beside it stand those of Mr. John Burroughs, and Mr. W. S. Kennedy. To these, and to the kind offices of the authors of the two last named, my book owes much of any value it may possess. I have also been assisted by the published reminiscences of Mr. J. T. Trowbridge, Mr. Moncure Conway, and Mr. Thomas Donaldson, and by the recently published *Diary in Canada* (edited by Mr. Kennedy), and Dr. I. H. Platt's Beacon Biography of the poet.

Since I never met Walt Whitman I am especially indebted to his friends for the personal details with which they have so generously

furnished me: beside those already named, t
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as to the Quaker ancestry of Walt Whitman
and Dr. E. Pardee Bucke has furnished me wit
an admirable sketch of his father Dr. R. M
Bucke's life and the photograph which I hav
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to whom I would here offer my most gratefu
thanks. And first, to Mr. Edward Carpente
whose own work has always been my best

guides in the study of Whitman's, and whose records of his interviews with the old poet in Camden have given me more insight into his character than any other words but Whitman's own. He has also read the MS., and aided me by numberless suggestions. Mrs. Bernard Berenson, who for some years enjoyed the old man's friendship, has supplied me with an invaluable picture of his relations with her father, the late Mr. Pearsall Smith, and his family, and has generously lent me various letters in her possession, and permitted me to make reproductions from them. Mr. J. W. Wallace, of the "Bolton group," has allowed me to read and use his manuscript description of a visit to Camden in 1891; and another of the same brotherhood, Dr. J. Johnston, whose admirable account of a similar series of interviews in the preceding year is well known by Whitman students, has supplied me with a photograph of the little Mickle Street house as it then was.

To Mr. William M. Rossetti and to Mr. Ernest Rhys I am indebted for valuable suggestions; and for similar help to my friends, Professor W. H. Hudson and Messrs. Arthur Sherwell, B. Kirkman Gray and C. F. Mott. Finally, the book owes much more than I can say to my wife.

While gratefully acknowledging the assistance of all these and others unnamed, I confess that I am alone responsible for the general accuracy of my statements, and the book's point of view, and I wish especially to relieve the personal friends of Whitman from any responsibility for

the hypothesis relating to his sojourn in the South, beyond what is stated in the Appendix. To all actual sins of commission and omission I plead guilty, trusting that for the sympathetic reader they may eventually be blotted out in the light which, obscured though it be, still shines upon my pages from the personality of Walt Whitman.

H. B. B.

London, *January*, 1905.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the Notes.

Bucke = R. M. Bucke's *Walt Whitman*, 1883.
Burroughs = John Burroughs' *Note on Walt Whitman*, 1867.
Burroughs (2) = John Burroughs' *Note on Walt Whitman.* Second Edition.
Burroughs (*a*) = John Burroughs' *Whitman: A Study*, 1896.
Carpenter = E. Carpenter's "Notes of Visits to W. W." in *Progressive Review:* (*a*) February, 1897; (*b*) April, 1897.
Camden's Compliment = *Camden's Compliment to W. W.*, 1889.
Cam. Mod. Hist. = *Cambridge Modern History: United States.*
Comp. Prose = *W. W.'s Complete Prose*, 1898.
Calamus = *Calamus, Letters of W. W. to Pete Doyle*, 1897.
Camden = *Camden Edition* (10 vols.) *of W. W.'s Works*, 1902.
Donaldson = T. Donaldson's *W. W.: The Man*, 1897.
Enc. Brit. Suppt. = *Encyclopædia Britannica: Supplement, United States.*
Goodbye and Hail = *Goodbye and Hail, W. W.*, 1892.
In re = *In re W. W.*, 1893.
Johnston = Dr. J. Johnston's *Notes of a Visit to W. W.*, 1890.
Kennedy = W. S. Kennedy's *Reminiscences of W. W.*, 1896.
L. of G. = *Leaves of Grass*, complete edition of 1897: followed by numerals in brackets, edition of that year.
Mem. Hist. N. Y. = J. G. Wilson's *Memorial History of New York.*
Roosevelt = T. Roosevelt's *New York*, 1891.
Symonds = J. A. Symonds's *W. W.: A Study*, 1893.
Wound-Dresser = *The W. D., Letters of W. W. to his Mother*, 1898.
Whit. Fellowship = *Whitman Fellowship Papers*, Philadelphia, 1894.

MANUSCRIPTS.

MSS. Berenson = Letters in possession of Mrs. Bernard Berenson.
MSS. Berenson (*a*) = Reminiscences contributed to this volume.
MSS. Carpenter = Letters in possession of E. Carpenter.
MSS. Diary = A Diary (1876-1887) in possession of H. Traubel.
MSS. Harned = Papers in possession of T. B. Harned.
MSS. Johnston = Papers in possession of J. H. Johnston, New York.
MSS. Traubel = Papers in possession of H. Traubel.
MSS. Wallace = J. W. Wallace's Diary of a Visit to W. W. in 1891.

INTRODUCTION

WHITMAN'S AMERICA

THE men of old declared that the lands of adventure lay in the West, for they were bold to follow the course of the sun; and to this day the bold do not look back to seek romance behind them in the East.

Whether this be the whole truth or no, such is the notion that comes upon the wind when, journeying westward in mid-Atlantic, you begin to know the faces on ship-board, and to understand what it is that is in their eyes. Strange eyes and foreign faces have these voyagers—dwellers upon Mediterranean shores, peasants from the borders of the Baltic, or dumb inhabitants of the vast eastern plains, huddled now together in the ship. But in them is a hope which triumphs over the misery of the present as it has survived the misery of the past, and to-day that hope has a name, and is America. For America is indeed the hope of the forlorn and disinherited in every land to whom a hope remains. From the ends of the earth they set out, and separated from one another by every barrier of race and language, meet here upon the ocean, having nothing in common but this hope, this dream which will yet weld them together into a new people. For the comfortable dreamer there is Italy and the

Past, but for many millions of the common people of Europe and of Italy herself—and the common people too have their dream—America, the land of the Future, is the Kingdom of Romance.

Nor to these only, but, as I think, to every traveller not unresponsive to the genius of the land. For it is the genius of youth—youth with its awkward power, its incompleteness, its promise. And the home of this genius must be the land not only of progress and material achievement, but also of those visions which haunt the heart of youth. America is more than the golden-appled earthly paradise of the poor, it is a land of spiritual promise. And more perhaps than that of any nation the American flag is to-day the symbol of a Cause, and of a Cause which claims all hearts because ultimately it is that of all Peoples.

And America has another claim to be regarded as truly romantic. Hers is the charm of novelty. It is not the glamour of the old but of the new, and the perennially new. Some four centuries have passed since the days of Columbus, centuries which have dimmed the lustre of many another adventurous voyage into dull antiquity, but America is still the New World, and the exhilarating air of discovery still breathes as fresh in the West as on the first morning.

With that discovery there dawned a new historic day whose sun is not yet set. We instinctively put back the beginning of our own era to the time of Elizabeth, that Virgin Queen in whose colony of Virginia the American people was first born, to grow up into maturity under its statesmen.

And if we see but vaguely in the greyest hours of our dawn the figure of the Discoverer, while beyond him all seem strange as the men of yesterday—if we behold our own sun rising on the broad Elizabethan hours—how fitting it is that the New World should be peopled by those who still retain most of the temper of that generous morning! The American of to-day with his thirst for knowledge, his versatility, his quick sense of the practicable, his delight in the doing of things, his directness and frankness of purpose, his comradeship and hospitality, his lack of self-consciousness—with all the naïve inconsistencies, the amiable braggings, the mouthings of phrases, and the love of praise which belong to such unconsciousness of self—with his glowing optimism, his belief in human nature, his faith and devotion to his ideals—the American of to-day is in all these things the Elizabethan of our story. America is the supreme creation of Elizabethan genius—its New World, to which even that world which we call "Shakespeare" must give place.[1]

The Romance of America is not only new, it is like a tale that is being told for the first time unto our own ears. And like some consummate story whose chapters, appearing month by month, hold us continually in expectant suspense, its plot is still evolving and its characters revealing themselves, so that as yet we can only guess at its *dénouement*.

I call it a Romance, for it is indeed a tale of wonder; but unlike the old romances its

[1] *Cf. Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 736; Burroughs (*a*), 240; Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, i., 10, 11, etc.; *L. of G.*, 436 n.

bold realism is not always beautiful. The style of its telling is often loud, its words blunt, its rhythm strange and full of changes. But it has a large Elizabethan movement which cannot be denied. Denounce and deprecate as we will, all that is young in us responds to it. The story carries us along, at times by violence and in our own despite, but so a story should. It may be the end will justify and explain passages that to-day are but obscure: no story is complete until the end, and America has not yet been told. It is still morning there: and the heart of it is still the heart of youth.

The unprejudiced and candid visitor will be provoked to criticism by much that he sees in the United States; but even his criticism will be prompted by the possibilities of the country. It is this sense of its possibilities which captures the imagination, and fills the mind with the desire to do—to correct, it may be—but in any case to do.

The incentive to action is felt by everyone, American or immigrant, and dominates all. Here for the first time one seems to be, as it were, in a live country, among a live people whose work is actually under its hand and must occupy it for years to come. In England things are different; the country does not so audibly challenge the labourer to till and tame it. It does not say so plainly to every man—*I want you, here is range and scope for all your manhood.* Only the seer can read that word written pathetically across all this English countryside whose smooth air of completion conceals s

blank a poverty. In America the very stones cry out, and all who run must read. And thus the whole American atmosphere is that of action.

The Chinese, that most practical of peoples, have an old saying that the purpose of the true worship of heaven is to spiritualise the earth. It is a reminder that materialism and mysticism should go hand in hand.

Now the American is often, and not unjustly, accused of sheer materialism. But by temper he is really an idealist. The very Constitution of the United States, not to mention the famous *Declaration*, is no less transcendental than the *Essays* of Emerson, nor less weighty with deep purpose than the speeches of Lincoln. All these are characteristic utterances of the American genius; they have been attested by events, and sealed in the blood of a million citizen soldiers.

And how, one may ask, could the citizens of a State which more than any other manifestly depends for its life upon communion in an ideal be other than idealists? Gathered from every section of the human race, this people has become a nation through its consciousness of a Cause; its members being possessed not of a common blood, tradition or literature, but of a purpose and idea sacred to all. If then the national life depends upon the living idealism of the people, the actual unquestionable vigour of this national life may be taken as evidence of the strength of that idealism. But, on the other hand, the nation's present pre-occupation with its merely material success conceals the gravest of all its perils, because it threatens the very principle of the national life.

Thus held together by its future, and not as seem most others, by their past, the American nation has been slow in coming to self-consciousness, slow therefore in producing an original or national art. Hitherto it has been occupied with its own Becoming; and to-day, to virile Americans, America remains the most engrossing of occupations, the noblest of all practicable dreams.

The spirit of the Renaissance has here attempted a task far graver than in Mediciar Florence or Elizabethan London: to create namely, not so much a new art as a new race It has here to achieve its incarnation not in line and colour, not in marble nor in imperishable verse, but in the flesh and blood of a nation gathered from every family of Man And for that, it is forever assimilating into itself scions of every European people, and transforming them out of Europeans into Americans

Vast as such a process is, the assimilation of all their surging aspirations and ideals into one has been hardly less vast. It is little wonder then that America has been slow in coming to self-consciousness. What is wonderful is her organic power of assimilation. And now there begin to be evidences in American thought of a spiritual synthesis, the widest known. As yet they are but vague suggestions. But they seem to indicate that when an American philosophy takes the field it will be pragmatical in the best sense; too earnestly concerned with conduct and with life to be careful of symmetry or tradition; directed toward the future, not the past. It will be a philosophy of possibilities founded upon the study of an adolescent race.

It seemed natural to preface this study of Whitman with a sketch of the American genius. Doubtless that genius has other aspects than those here presented, and to some of these, later pages will bear witness; but the impression I have attempted to reproduce is at least taken from life. It is, moreover, not unlike that of Whitman himself as presented in his first Preface, and is even more suggestive of the America of his youth than that of his old age.

Every thinker owes much to his time and race, and Whitman more than most. He always averred that the story of his life was bound up with that of his country, and took significance from it. To be understood, the man must be seen as an American. As a Modern, we might add, for the story of his land is so brief.

Dead now some thirteen years, and barely an old man when he died, his personal memory seemed to embrace nearly the whole romance. His grandfather was acquainted with old Tom Paine, whose *Common Sense* had popularised the Republican idea in the very hour of American Independence: he himself had talked with the soldiers of Washington, and as a lad[1] he had met Aaron Burr who killed the glorious Hamilton, sponsor for that Constitution which when Whitman died was but a century old.

In the seven decades of his life the American population had multiplied near seven-fold, and had been compacted together into an imperial nation. It seemed almost as though he could remember the thirteen poor and jealous States,

[1] MSS. Harned.

with their conflicting interests and traditions, their widely differing climates, industries and inhabitants, separated from one another by vast distances — and how they yielded themselves reluctantly under the hand of Fate to grow together in Union into the greatest of civilised peoples; while central in the story of his life was that Titanic conflict whose solemn bass accompaniment toned and deepened loose phrases and popular enthusiasms into a national hymn.

Himself something of a poet—how much we need not attempt to estimate—he did continual homage to that greater Poet, whose works were at once his education and his library—the genius of America. None other, ancient or mediæval, discoursed to his ear or penned in immortal characters for him to read, rhythms so large and pregnant. It was the prayer and purpose of his life that he might contribute his verse to that great poem; and his life is like a verse which it is impossible to separate from its context. That he understood, and even in a sense re-discovered America, can scarcely be denied by serious students of his work. I believe that the genius of America will in time discover some essential elements of herself in him, and will understand herself the better for his pages.

Belonging thus to America as a nation, the earlier scenes of Walt Whitman's story are fitly laid in and about metropolitan New York. It was not till middle life and after the completion and publication of what may be regarded as the first version of his *Leaves of Grass*—the

edition that is to say of 1860—that he removed for a while to the Federal capital where, throughout the War, the interest of America was centred. Afterwards he withdrew to Camden, into a sort of hermitage, midway between New York and Washington.

Though his heart belonged to the West, the Far West never knew him. Both north and south, he wandered near as widely as the limits of his States. He knew the Mississippi, the Great Lakes, and the Rocky Mountains; but all that vast and wonderful country which reaches west from Colorado towards Balboa's sea was untrodden by his feet. A circle broadly struck from the actual centre of population, and taking in Denver, New Orleans, Boston and Quebec, includes the whole field of his wanderings within a radius of a thousand miles. He was not a traveller according to our modern use of the word; he had never lost sight for many hours of the shores of America; even Cuba and Hawaii were beyond his range.

But he had studied nearly all the phases of life included in the Republic. His birth and breeding in the "middle States" gave him a metropolitan quality which neither New England nor the South could have contributed. Of peasant stock, himself an artizan and always and properly a man of the people, he was of the average stuff of the American nation; and his everyday life—apart from the central and exceptional fact of his individuality—was that of millions of unremembered citizens. Whitman was not only an American type, he was also a type of America.

The typical American is not city born. Rapidly as that sinister fate is overtaking the Englishman, the native American is still of rural birth.[1] And, as we have said, Whitman was of the average; he was born in Long Island of farming folk.

But he was a modern, and the modern movement throughout the world is citywards. Everywhere the Industrial Revolution is destroying the economy of our ancestors and creating another; diverting all the scattered energy which springs out of the countryside into the great reservoirs of city life, there to be employed upon new tasks.

Modern life is the life of the town, and for many years it was Whitman's life. But again every town depends for its vitality and wealth upon the countryside. The city is a mere centre, factory and exchange. It cannot live upon itself. It handles everything but produces none of all that raw material from which everything that it handles is made. Especially is this true of the human stuff of civilisation. Men are only shaped and employed in cities—they are not produced there. The city uses and consumes the humanity that is made in the fields. And Whitman, who was drawn into the outskirts of the metropolis as a child, and as a young man entered into its heart, was born among wide prospects and shared the sane life of things that root in the earth. He was the better fitted to bear and to correlate all the fierce stimuli of metropolitan life.

[1] *Cf. En. Brit. Suppt.*

WALT WHITMAN

CHAPTER I

THE WHITMANS OF WEST HILLS

THE old writers[1] tell how Long Island was once the happy hunting ground of wolves and Indians, ne playing place of deer and wild turkeys; and how ne seals, the turtles, grampuses and pelicans loved its ng, quiet beaches. Seals and whales are still occa- onal visitors, and its coasts are rich in lore of wrecks, f pirates and of buried treasure.

A hundred years ago it could boast of hamlets only ss remote from civilisation than are to-day the villages that other "Long Island"—the group of the Outer Hebrides—which, for an equal distance, extends along ne Scottish coast from Butt of Lewis to Barra Head. he desultory stage then occupied a week on the double urney between Brooklyn and Sag Harbour. Beyond ne latter, Montauk Point thrusts its lighthouse some teen miles out into the Atlantic breakers. Here the st Indians of the island lingered on their reservation, nd here the whalers watched for the spouting of their rey in the offing.

A ridge of hills runs along the island near the northern ore, rising here and there into heights of three or

[1] See *inter alia* Furman's *Antiquities of Long Island*; and his *Notes lating to the Town of Brooklyn*; Silas Wood's *Sketch of First Settl- nt of L. I.*; B. F. Thompson's *History of L. I.*; N. S. Prime's *istory of L. I.*; *A Brief Description of New York*, by Daniel Denton 590), ed. by G. Furman.

four hundred feet which command the long gradual slope of woods and meadows to the south, with the distant sea beyond them; to the north, across the narrow Sound, rises the blue coast line of Connecticut.

It is on the slopes below the highest of these points of wide vision that the Whitman homestead lies, one of the pleasant farms of a land which has always been mainly agricultural. Large areas of the island are poor and barren, covered still with scrub and "kill-calf" or picturesque pine forest, as in the Indian days. But the land here is productive.

From the wooded head of Jayne's Hill behind the farm, the township of Huntington stretches to the coast where it possesses a harbour. It was all purchased from the Indians in 1653, for six coats, six bottles, six hatchets, six shovels, ten knives, six fathom of wampum, thirty muxes, and thirty needles.[1] The Indians themselves do not seem to have caused much anxiety to the settlers; but a generation later, it is recorded that in a single year no fewer than fifteen of the wolves, which they had formerly kept half-tamed, were killed by the citizens of Huntington.

The next troublers of the peace were the British troops. For here, a century later, during the last years of the War of Independence, Colonel Thompson of His Majesty's forces pulled down the Presbyterian Church and with its timbers erected a fortress in the public burying-ground, his soldiers employing the gravestones for fire-places and ovens.[2] They seem to have occupied another meeting-house as a stable. Such are the every-day incidents of a military occupation; arising out of them, claims to the amount of £7,000 were preferred against the colonel by the township; but he withdrew to England, where, as Count Rumford, he afterward became famous upon more peaceful fields.

In Whitman's childhood, Huntington was, as it still

[1] Wood, 73 n.
[2] See Wood's, Thomson's, and Prime's *History of L. I.*

mains, a quiet country town of one long straggling reet. It counted about 5,000 inhabitants, many of em substantial folk, and in this was not far behind ooklyn. In those days the whole island could not ast 60,000 people. But if they were few, they were ılwart. The old sea-going Paumànackers were a ugh and hardy folk, and travellers remarked the frank endliness of the island youth.[1]

Inter-racial relations seem upon the whole to have n good; the Indians being treated with comparative tice, and the negro slaves well cared for. Between Dutch and the English there was friction in the ly years. Long Island, or Paumànok—to give it the st familiar of its several Indian names[2]—had been tled by both races; the Dutch commencing on the st, opposite to their fortress and trading station of w Amsterdam (afterwards New York), and the Eng- n, at about the same time, upon the east. They met r West Hills, and Whitman had the full benefit of birth upon this border-line, Dutch blood and English ng almost equally mingled in his veins.

As to the Dutch of Long Island, they were marked re as elsewhere by sterling and stubborn qualities. ere is a reserve in the Dutch nature which, while tends to arouse suspicion in others, makes it the t of stocks upon which to graft a more emotional ple. Slow, cautious, conservative, domestic, practical, y have formed a bed-rock of sound sense and phleg- tic temper, not for Long Island only, but for the ole of New York State, where, till the middle of the nteenth century,[3] they were predominant. Perhaps other foundation could have adequately supported superstructure of fluctuating and emotional elements ich has since been raised upon it.

The Dutch homesteads of the island were famous for ir simple, severe but solid comfort, their clean white ded floors, their pewter and their punches. From

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 7; *cf.* Furman's *Antiquities*, 249; Denton, 14.
[2] Wood, 65; *cf. Comp. Prose.* [3] *In re*, 197.

such a home came Whitman's mother. She was a v
Velsor of Cold Spring, which lies only two or th
miles west of the Whitman farm. Her father, Ma
Cornelius van Velsor, was a typical, burly, jovial, r
faced Hollander.

But Louisa, his daughter, was not wholly Dutch,
the major's wife was Naomi Williams, of a line
sailors, one of that great Welsh clan which coun
Roger Williams among its first American representativ
Naomi was of Quaker stock.[1]

The Quakers appear early in the story of the isla
whose settlement was taking place during the first ye
of their world-wide activity. Within a quarter o
century of the first purchase of land from the India
an English Quaker, Robert Hodgson,[2] was arrested i
Long Island orchard for the holding of a conventi
He was carried to New Amsterdam, cruelly hand
and imprisoned there.

In 1663, John Bowne,[3] an islander of some stand
who had joined the Friends, was arrested and tra
ported to Holland, there to undergo his trial for here
This was in the period when the district was un
Dutch control. A year later this came to an end,
when, in 1672, George Fox preached under the o
which stood opposite to Bowne's house[4] at Flush
and again from the granite rock in the Oyster
cemetery, he seems to have been met by no opposi
more serious than that which was offered by cer
members of his own Society.

We read[5] of the settlement of a group of substan
Quaker families near the village of Jericho, where t
built themselves a place of worship in 1689; and h
a century later, lived Elias Hicks, perhaps the al
character, as he was the most tragic figure, in the s
of American Quakerism. He was a friend of Whitm
paternal grandfather, and thus from both parents

[1] See Appendix A. [2] S. M. Janney's *History of Friends*, vol.
[3] Furman's *Antiq.*, 97; Janney, vol. ii.
[4] Furman's *Antiq.*, 229. [5] Thompson, *op. cit.*

y inherited something either of the blood or the tradi-
n of that Society which, directly or indirectly, gave
ne of the noblest of its leaders to the nation. Such
n, for instance, as William Penn, Thomas Paine, and,
lirectly, Abraham Lincoln.

The earliest of the Whitmans of whom there appears
be any record is Abijah, apparently an English
man farmer in the days of Elizabeth.[1] His two
ns sailed west in 1640 on the *True-Love*. One of
se, Zechariah, became a minister in the town of
lford, Connecticut, and sometime before Charles II.
s crowned in the old country,[2] Joseph, Zechariah's
n, had crossed the Sound and settled in the neigh-
urhood of Huntington. Either he or his successor
ms to have purchased the farm at West Hills, where
alt Whitman was afterwards born; and in 1675
Whitman's hollow" is mentioned as a boundary of
e township.

The garrulous histories of Long Island have little to
l us of the family. One of Joseph's great-grandsons
s killed in the battle of Brooklyn,[3] that first great
ht between the forces of England and her rebellious
onies, when in 1776 Howe and his Hessians drove
tnam's recruits back upon the little town. Lieu-
ant Whitman was one of those who fell on that day
fore Washington could carry the remnant of his
ops across the East River under the friendly shelter
the fog.

Another great-grandson, Jesse, married the orphan
ce of Major Brush, also a "dangerous rebel" who
ffered in the British prison of "the Provost".[4]
ushes, Williamses and Whitmans all seem to have
ved in the armies of Independence, and one at least
their women would have cut a figure in the field.
r Jesse's mother was large-built, dark-complexioned,
d of such masculine manners and speech that she

[1] Symonds, xii.; *Savage Genealog. Dict.*
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 3; Bucke, 13. [3] Camden Introd. [4] *Ibid.*

seemed to have been born to horses, oaths and tobacc
As a widow she readily ruled her slaves, surviving to
great age. In contrast with her, Jesse's wife, who al
displayed remarkable ability, was a natural lady.[1] Sh
had been a teacher, and was a woman of judgmen
Perhaps Jesse himself was of gentler character than h
terrible old mother; he had leanings towards Quakerism
and was a friend and admirer of Elias Hicks.[2] So t
was Walter, the father of Walt, and one of Jesse's ma
sons.

Born in 1789—the year in which the amended Co
stitution of the United States actually came into force
Walter grew up into a silent giant,[3] a serious solid ma
reserved and slow of speech, kindly but shrewd and o
stinate; capable too, when he was roused, of passio
He was a wood-cutter and carpenter, a builder of fram
houses and barns, solid as himself. He learnt his tra
in New York, and afterwards wandered from place
place in its pursuit. For a time after his marriage
1816, he appears to have lived at West Hills, probab
farming a part, at least, of the lands of his fathe
Their old house had recently been replaced by anoth
at a little distance. This is still standing, and he
three years later, his second son was born. The ch
was called after his father, but the name was prompt
clipped, and to this day he remains "Walt".

His mother,[4] Louisa van Velsor, was a well-ma
handsome young woman, now in her twenty-four
year. Fearless, practical and affectionate, hers was
strong and happy presence, magnetic with the poten
of a profound nature, as large and attractive as it w
without taint of selfishness. She seemed to unite
herself the gentle sweetness and restraint of her Quak
mother, with the more heroic, full-blooded qualities

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 6; Camden, xix. [2] *In re*, 202.
[3] Burroughs, 79; Bucke, 15; *Whit. Fellowship*, '94 (Brinton
Traubel); *Wound Dresser*, 115, etc.
[4] Bucke, 16; *Comp. Prose*, 274; Camden, xvii.; *In re*, 195, etc.
[5] See Appendix A.

LOUISA (VAN VELSOR) WHITMAN AT SIXTY

the old jolly major. She had a natural gift of description and was a graphic story-teller, but of book-learning she had next to none, and letter-writing was always difficult to her. She lacked little, however, of that higher education which comes of life-long true and fine relations with persons and with things. She had been an excellent horsewoman, and in later years her visitors were impressed by her vitality and reserve power. Her words fell with weight; she had a grave dignity; but withal her oval face, framed in its dark hair and snowy cap, was full of kindness; and about the corners of her mouth, and under her high-set brows, there always lurked a quaint and quiet humour. Little as we know of Louisa Whitman, we know enough to regard her as in every respect the equal in character of her son, whom she endowed with a natural happiness of heart. She became the mother of eight children, and lived to be nearly eighty years old, somewhat crippled by rheumatism, but industrious, charming and beloved to the last.

The first four years of his life, little Walt spent at West Hills. He is not the only worthy of the place, for here, half a century earlier, was born the Honourable Silas Wood,[1] who now and for ten years to come, represented the district in Congress. Already, doubtless, he was collecting materials for his *Sketch of the First Settlement of Long Island*, soon to appear.[2] But neither he nor his history greatly concerns us.

Some two or three miles of sandy lane separate the old Whitman farm from the present railway station. On an autumn day one finds the way bordered by huckleberries and tall evening primroses, yellow toadflax, blue chickory and corn-flowers, and sturdy forests of golden-rod among the briars and bushes. In the rough hedgerows are red sumachs, oaks, chestnuts and tall cedars, locusts and hickories; the gateways open on to broad fields full of picturesque cabbages, or the plumed regiments of the tall green Indian corn. It is a farming

[1] Wood, 5 (ed. by A. J. Spooner). [2] 1828.

country, and a country rich in game—foxes and quails and partridges—and populous now with all kinds of chirping insects, with frogs and with mosquitoes. The wooded hills themselves are full of birds; beyond them there are vineyards.

The road winds to the hills which give the place its name. To be precise, the Whitman farm, as my driver assured me, belongs to the hamlet of Millwell, but the title of West Hills is better known. The other name may, however, serve to recall those cold sweet springs which rise along the foot of the hills and keep the country green, and whose waters are highly esteemed in New York.

The lane passes by the end of an old grey shingled farmhouse, boasting a new brick chimney. A delicate, ash-like locust tree stands by the big gate.

Here, if you turn into the farm road under the boughs of the orchard, and then, through the wicket in the palings, cross the weedy garden square, you may enter under the timber-propped porch into the low-ceiled house where Walt was born. It is small but comfortable, of two stories and a half. The morning sun streams through the open door, blinks in at the sun-shutters, and filters through the mosquito netting. On the left of the hall[1] are a bedroom and parlour, and the dining-room is on the right, where a wing of one story has been added. Beyond this there is a lower extension; and beyond again, extend the chocolate-coloured barns and sheds and byres and stables of the farm. At one corner of the garden palings stands the little well-house with its four neat pillars, and a big bell swings in its forked post by the side gate to summon the men from the fields into which one sees the farm road wandering. The fields run up to the wood. Across the road from the garden is an apple orchard, where the pigs root, and the hens scratch and cluck and scuffle. It was planted by Walt's uncle Jesse.

This is not the first ancestral cabin of the Whitmans;

[1] *Whit. Fellowship, op. cit.*

WHITMAN'S BIRTHPLACE AT WEST HILLS, FROM THE LANE, 1904

hat lies at a little distance, nearer to the woods. It elongs now to another farm — the former holding aving been divided—and the old cabin has become a aggon-shed. Both farms have long since passed out f the family; but near the first house, on a little woody noll,[1] you may still see the picturesque group of un- ttered stones which cluster on the Whitman burying ill.

Neither Walt himself nor his father and mother are uried here among their relatives and ancestors; but he boy, so early pre-occupied with the mysteries of life, ust have often stolen to this strange solitude to com- une with its silence and to hear the wind among the ranches, whispering of death. There is a big old oak ear by, old perhaps as the first Whitman settlement, nd a grove of beautiful black walnuts, and this, too, as one of the children's haunts.

Such was the old Whitman home and country, to hich the boy's earliest memories belonged, where he pent some of the years and nearly all the holidays of is youth and early manhood, and in which his later houghts found their natural background, his deepest onsciousness its native soil. It is, as we have seen, no ame or narrow country, but wide and generous, and it s within sound of the sea. In the still night that suc- eeds a storm, you may hear the strange low murmur f the Atlantic surf beating upon the coast.[2] The boy as born in the hills, with that sea-murmur about him.

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 4. [2] *Ibid.*, 6.

CHAPTER II

BOYHOOD IN BROOKLYN

THE hill-range which forms the back-bone of Long Island, and upon whose slopes Walt Whitman was born, terminates on the west in Brooklyn Heights which overlook the busy bay and crowded city of New York.

The heights recall Washington's masterly retreat and the hint is enough to remind the shame-faced English visitor that the American is not without cause for a certain coolness in the very genuine affection which he manifests for the mother country. 'Seventy-six and the six years that followed, with all their legacy of bitter thoughts, was succeeded by 1814 and the burning of the Capitol. In this later war it was Virginia, not New England, that took the initiative; Massachusetts and Connecticut even opposed it, and it may have been none too popular in adjacent Long Island.

It is doubtful whether Major van Velsor or his sons actually took the field against the British. But the second and last of the Anglo-American wars was still a bitter and vivid memory when in May, 1823,[1] toward Walt's fourth birthday, his father, the old major's son-in-law, left the farm, removing with his family to Front Street, Brooklyn, near the wharves and water-side.

Though but a country town with great elm-trees still shading its main thoroughfare,[2] Brooklyn was growing

[1] *Comp. Prose;* Bucke; MSS. Harned.

[2] Descriptions of Brooklyn at this time in *Mem. Hist. N.Y.;* Roosevelt; Thompson, 179 n.; Furman's *Brooklyn;* Furman's *Antiq.*, 390-9; Burroughs; *Comp. Prose*, 10 n., 510, etc.

and its trade was brisk. It is likely that the carpenter, Whitman, framed more than one of the hundred and fifty houses which were added to it during the year.

In the meantime, Walt took advantage of his improved situation to study men and manners in a seaport town. He watched the ferry-boats that for the last ninety years had plied to and fro, binding Brooklyn to its big neighbour opposite upon Manhattan Island. For another sixty years their decks provided the only roadway across the East River, and they still go back and forward loaded heavily, in spite of the two huge but graceful bridges which now span the grey waters. The boy gazed wondering at the patient horse in the round house on deck, which, turning like a mule at a wheel-pump, provided the propelling power for the ferry-boat till Fulton replaced him by steam.

The boy in frocks must have wondered, too, at the great shows and pageants of 1824 and 1825 which filled New York with holiday-making crowds. For in August of the former year, came the old hero of two Republics, General Lafayette, to be received with every demonstration of admiring gratitude by the people of America. Some scintilla of the glory of those days—pale reflection, as it was, of the far-away tragic radiance that lighted up the world at the awakening of Justice and of Liberty on both sides of the sea—fell upon the child. For when the old soldier visited Brooklyn to lay the corner-stone of a library there, he found the youngster in harm's way and lifted him, with a hearty kiss, on to a coign of vantage.[1] Thus, at six years old, Walt felt himself already famous.

Again, a few months later, the city was all ablaze with lights and colour and congratulations on the opening of the Erie Canal, which connected New York with Ohio and promised to break the monopoly of Western commerce held hitherto by the queen city of the Mississippi.

By this time, the family counted four children; two brothers, Jesse and Walt, and two little girls, Mary and

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 9 n.

Hannah, all born within six years. Of the children, Walt and Hannah appear to have been special friends, but we have little record of this period. As they grew old enough, they attended the Brooklyn public school and went duly to Sunday school as well.[1] In the summers they spent many a long holiday in the fields and lanes about West Hills.

A reminiscence of those times is enshrined in one of the best known of the *Leaves of Grass*,[2] written more than a quarter of a century later, a memory of the May days when the boy discovered a mocking-birds' nest containing four pale green eggs, among the briars by the beach, and watched over them there from day to day till presently the mother-bird disappeared; and then of those September nights when, escaping from his bed, he ran barefoot down on to the shore through the windy moonlight, flung himself upon the sand, and listened to the desolate singing of the widowed he-bird close beside the surf. There, in the night, with the sea and the wind, he lay utterly absorbed in the sweet, sad singing of that passion, some mystic response awakening in his soul; till in an ecstasy of tears which flooded his young cheeks, he felt, rather than understood, the world-meaning hidden in the thought of death.[3]

This self-revealing reminiscence, even if it should prove to diverge from historic incident and to take some colour from later thought, illumines the obscurity which covers the inner life of his childhood. Elsewhere we can dimly see him as his mother's favourite; towards her he was always affectionate. But with his father he showed himself wayward, idle, self-willed and independent, altogether a difficult lad for that kindly but taciturn

[1] *W. W.'s Diary in Canada*, 5. [2] *L. of G.*, 196.

[3] *Cf.* especially:—

Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

and determined man to manage. Walt retained these qualities, and they caused endless trouble to every ill-advised person who afterwards attempted the task in which worthy Walter Whitman failed.

Among his young companions, though he was not exactly imperious, Walt seems to have played the part of a born leader; he was a clever boy; he always had ideas, and he always had a following. And as a rule he was delightful to be with, for he had an unflagging capacity for enjoyment and adventure.

But there must have been times when he was moody and reserved. The passionate element in his nature which the song of the mocking-bird aroused belongs rather to night solitudes than to perpetual society and sunshine. As he grew older, and, perhaps, somewhat overgrew his physical strength,[1] he was often unhappy in himself. There was something tempestuous in him which no one understood, he himself least of any. Probably his wise and very human mother came nearest to understanding; and her heart was with him as he fought out his lonely battles with that strange enemy of Youth's peace, the soul.

Little brothers were added from time to time to the family group; Andrew, George and Jeff, and last of all poor under-witted Ted, born when Walt was a lad of sixteen, to be the life-long object of his mother's affectionate care. The names of Andrew and Jeff reflect their father's political sentiments; the latter recalling the founder of the old Jeffersonian Republicanism; and the former being called after Andrew Jackson, the popular and successful candidate for the presidency, in the year of the boy's birth, who afterwards reorganised his party, creating the "Democratic" machine to take the place of what had hitherto been the "Republican" caucus. Thus Republicanism changed its name, and the title did not reappear in party politics for a generation.

As Walter Whitman built, mortgaged and eventually

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 10; Grace Gilchrist in *Temple Bar*, cxiii., 200.

sold his frame-houses, the family would often move from one into another: we can trace at least five migrations[1] during the ten years that they remained in Brooklyn. He was a busy, but never a prosperous man; with his large family, the fluctuations of trade must have affected him seriously; and scattered through his son's story, there are fast-days and seasons of privation. Walter Whitman was, in short, a working man upon the borders of the middle-class: thrifty, shrewd, industrious, but dependent upon his earnings; mixing at times with people of good education, but of little himself; a master-workman, the son of a well-read and thoughtful mother, living in the free and natural social order which at that time prevailed in Brooklyn and New York.

He was not outwardly religious; he was never a church-goer; even his wife, who called herself a Baptist, only went irregularly,[2] and then, with an easy tolerance, to various places of worship—the working mother of eight children has her hands full on Sundays. In the household there was no form of family prayers. But when old Elias Hicks[3] preached in the neighbourhood, they went to hear him, tending more towards a sort of liberal Quakerism than to anything else.

The Whitmans were not an irreligious family—Walt was, for instance, fairly well-grounded in the Scriptures—but they thought for themselves, they disliked anything that savoured of exclusion, and their religion consisted principally in right living and in kindliness. Their devotion to the old Quaker minister is interesting. Hicks was a remarkable man and a most powerful and moving preacher. He was large and liberal-minded; too liberal, it would seem, for some of his hearers. His utterances had however passed unchallenged till an evangelical movement, fostered by some English Friends among their American brethren, made further acquiescence seem impossible.

[1] MSS. Harned; *Comp. Prose*, 9. [2] *In re*, 38.

[3] *Comp. Prose*, 9, 457-474; E. Hicks' *Journal*, under 1829; *The Friend* (Philadelphia), *or Advocate of Truth*, i., 216 (1828).

WALTER WHITMAN, SENIOR

That which complacently calls itself orthodoxy is naturally intolerant, it can, indeed, hardly even admit tolerance to a place among the virtues; and the evangelical propaganda must be very pure if it is to be unaccompanied by the spirit of exclusion. It may seem strange that such a spirit should enter into a Society which gathers its members under the name of "Friends," a name which seems to indicate some basis broader than the creeds, some spiritual unity which could dare to welcome the greatest diversity of view because it would cultivate mutual understanding. But the broader the basis and the more spiritual the bond of fellowship, the more disastrous is the advent of the spirit of schism masking itself under some title of expediency, and here this spirit had forced an entrance.

Between Hicks—who himself appears to have been somewhat intolerant of opposition, a strong-willed man, frankly hostile to the evangelical dogmatics—and the narrower sort of evangelicals, relations became more and more strained, until, in 1828, the octogenarian minister was disowned by the official body of Quakers, after some painful scenes. He was however followed into his exile by a multitude of his hearers and others who foresaw and dreaded the crystallisation of Quakerism under some creed.

Soon after the crisis, and only three months before his death, Elias Hicks preached in the ball-room of Morrison's Hotel on Brooklyn Heights. Among the mixed company who listened on that November evening to the old man's mystical and prophetic utterance, was the ten-year old boy, accompanying his parents.

Hicks sprang from the peasant-farming class to which the Whitmans belonged; and, as a lad, had been intimate with Walt's great-grandfather, and with his son after him. It was then, with a sort of hereditary reverence, that the boy beheld that intense face, with its high-seamed forehead, the smooth hair parted in the middle and curling quaintly over the collar behind; the hawk nose, the high cheek bones, the repression of the mouth, and the curiously Indian aspect of the tall com-

manding figure, clad in the high vest and coat of Quaker cut. The scene was one he never forgot. The finely-fitted and fashionable place of dancing, the officers and gay ladies in that mixed and crowded assembly, the lights, the colours and all the associations, both of the faces and of the place, presenting so singular a contrast with the plain, ancient Friends seated upon the platform, their broad-brims on their heads, their eyes closed; with the silence, long continued and becoming oppressive; and most of all, with the tall, prophetic figure that rose at length to break it.

With grave emphasis he pronounced his text: "What is the chief end of man?" and with fiery and eloquent eyes, in a strong, vibrating, and still musical voice, he commenced to deliver his soul-awakening message. The fire of his fervour kindled as he spoke of the purpose of human life; his broad-brim was dashed from his forehead on to one of the seats behind him. With the power of intense conviction his whole presence became an overwhelming persuasion, melting those who sat before him into tears and into one heart of wonder and humility under his high and simple words.

The sermon itself has not come down to us. In his *Journal*,[1] Hicks has described the meeting as a "large and very favoured season". It seems to have been devoid of those painful incidents of opposition which saddened so many similar occasions during these last years of his ministry.

The old man had been accused of Deism, as though he were a second Tom Paine and devotee of "Reason"; in reality his message was somewhat conservative and essentially mystical. A hostile writer[2] asserts truly that the root of his heresy—if heresy we should call it—lay in his setting up of the Light Within as the primary rule of faith and practice. He always viewed the Bible writings as a secondary standard of truth or guide to action; as a book, though the best among books. And as a book, it was the "letter" only: the "spirit that

[1] 3rd ed., 438. [2] *The Beacon*, 145.

giveth life" even to the letter, was in the hearts of men.

In his attitude toward the idea of Christ, he distinguished, like many other mystics, between the figure of the historic Jesus of Nazareth and that indwelling Christ of universal mystical experience, wherewith according to his teaching, Jesus identified himself through the deepening of his human consciousness into that of Deity. In the mystical view, this God-consciousness is in some measure the common inheritance of all the saints, and underlies the everyday life of men. And to it, as a submerged but present element in the life of their hearers, Fox and the characteristic Quaker preachers have always directed their appeal, seeking to bring it up into consciousness. Once evoked and recognised, this divine element must direct and control all the faculties of the individual. It is the new humanity coming into the world.

Hicks recognised in Jesus the most perfect of initiates into this new life; and as such, he accorded a special authority to the Gospel teachings, but demanded that they should be construed by the reader according to the Christ-spirit in his own heart. Properly understood, the doctrine of the Inner Light is not, as many have supposed it to be, the *reductio ad absurdum* of individual eccentricity. On the contrary it tends to a transcendental unity; for the spirit whose irruption into the individual consciousness it seeks and supposes, is that spirit and light wherein all things are united and in harmony. In this sense, the Quaker preacher was appealing to the essence of all social consciousness—that realisation of an organic fellowship-in-communion which the sacraments of the churches are designed to cultivate.

However dark his great subject may appear to the trained gaze of philosophy, the old man's words brought illumination to the little boy. The sense of human dignity was deepened in him; he breathed an air of solemnity and inspiration.

Hicks died early in the new year, and with him there

probably fell away the last strong link which held the Whitmans to Quakerism. But the seed of the ultimate Quaker faith—that faith by which alone a quaint little society rises out of a merely historic and sectarian interest to become a symbol of the eternal truths which underlie Society as a whole, a faith which declares of its own experience that Deity is immanent in the heart of Man—this seed of faith was sown in the lad's mind to become the central principle around which all his after thought revolved.

Although, as these incidents make evident, Walt's nature was strongly emotional, he never went through the process known as conversion. Religion came to him naturally. Responsive from his childhood to the emotional influence of that ultimate reality which we call "God" or "the spiritual," he can never have had the overwhelming sense of inward disease and degradation which conversion seems to presuppose. Well-born and surrounded by wholesome influences, it is probable that the higher elements of his nature were always dominant. The idea of abject unworthiness would hardly be suggested to his young mind. He was not ignorant of evil, insensible to temptation, or innocent of those struggles for self-mastery which increase with the years of youth. We have reason to believe that he was wilful and passionate; though he was too affectionate and too well-balanced to be ill-natured. Harmonious natures are not insensitive to their own discordant notes, and the harmony of Whitman held many discords in solution.

He had then in his own experience, even as a child material sufficient for a genuine sense of sin. But this sense, never, so far as we know, became acute enough to cause a crisis in his life, never created in his mind any feeling of an irreparable disaster, or any discord which he despaired of ultimately resolving. He had not been taught to regard God as a severe judge, of incredible blindness to the complexity of human nature;[1] and

[1] Bucke, 61.

perhaps partly in consequence of this, he was ever a rebel against the Divine Justice.

There is, it may be said, another kind of conversion, a turning of the eyes of the soul to discover the actual presence and power of God at hand: the sequel may show whether Whitman felt himself to be ignorant of this change.

Honest, upright and self-respecting, his parents never took an ascetic view of morality. They did not share in that puritanical hostility to art and to amusements which too long distorted the image of truth in the mirror of Quakerism. Even as a lad, Walt discovered those provinces of the world of romance which lie across the footlights, and in the dazzling pages of the *Arabian Nights;*[1] and, as a youth, he followed the wizard of Waverley through all his stories and poems, becoming, soon after Sir Walter's death, the happy possessor of Lockhart's complete edition, in a solid octavo volume of 1,000 pages. From this time forward he was an insatiable novel-reader, especially devoted to Fenimore Cooper, who was then delighting the younger generation with stories of pioneer life.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the boy's life at this time was all amusement. At eleven years of age he was in a lawyer's office,[2] proud in the possession of a desk and window-corner of his own. The master found him a bright boy and was kind to him, forwarding his limited education a step further. He also subscribed on his behalf to a circulating library which supplied the lad with a continuous series of tales. But for whatever reason—one fears it was not unconnected with those stories—Walt soon found himself running errands for another master.

In his thirteenth year he was put to the printing trade, and ceased, at least for a while, to live under his father's roof.[3] The mother was out of health for a long

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 9; *L. of G.*, 440. [2] Bucke; MSS. Harned.
[3] *Comp. Prose*, 9, 10; MSS. Harned.

time, during the period of the youngest son's birth and infancy, and when in 1832 the town was visited by a severe epidemic of cholera, the Whitman family removed into the country. But Walt stayed behind boarding with the other apprentices of the Brooklyn postmaster and printer. Mr. Clements and his family were good to the lad while he was with them, and some effusions of his—for like other clever boys he was writing verses—appear to have found their way into the *Long Island Patriot.*

From the *Patriot* he soon removed to the *Star*, another local weekly, whose proprietor, Mr. Alden J. Spooner was a principal figure in the Brooklyn of those days and who long retained a vivid memory of a certain idle lad who worked in his shop. If he had been stricken with fever and ague, he used to say laughing, the boy would have been too lazy to shake.[1] At thirteen, Walt was too much interested in watching things to take kindly to work; most of his time was spent in learning what the world had to teach him; but in the end he learnt his trade as well.

No place could have been better chosen to awake his interest in the many-sided life around him than a printing office, the centre of all the local news. He grew he developed fast in every way, shot up long and stalk scribbled for the press as well as learning his proper business, and became a very young man about town. Already, he felt the attraction of the great island city of Mannahatta, where, according to its earliest name, for ever "gaily dash the coming, going, hurrying sea waves".[2]

New York had for a time been crippled by the collapse of American trade which followed the close of the Napoleonic wars in Europe,[3] but had recovered again and was now growing rapidly — a city of perhaps 200,000 inhabitants, the English element predominating

[1] MSS. Johnston, paper by Chandos Fulton.
[2] *L. of G.*, 385; Kennedy, 64.
[3] For New York see esp. *Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, and Roosevelt.

in its curiously mixed population. Though it was prosperous, it had its share of misfortune. Serious riots —racial, religious and political—were not infrequent. Epidemics of cholera swept through it; and in December, 1835, thirteen acres of its buildings were burnt out in a three days' conflagration.

In spite of these disasters the town grew and extended, and means of locomotion multiplied. The stages were running on Broadway from Bowling Green to Bleecker Street, that is about half-way to Central Park, and the great thoroughfare was crowded with traffic, presenting a scene busier even and certainly more picturesque than that of to-day. Fashionable folk still lived "down town" below the present City Hall, in a district now given up as exclusively to offices and warehouses as is the City of London. Ladies took their children down to play upon the open space of the Battery, looking down the beautiful bay; and did their shopping at the various Broadway stores. Upon their door-steps, on either side of the street, citizens still sat out with their families through the summer evenings; they condescended to drink at the city pumps, and to buy hot-corn and ices from the wayside vendors, while the height of diversion was to run with the engine to some fire. In a word, New York life was still natural and democratic; palaces and slums were as unknown to the democracy of the metropolis as the sky-scrapers which render the approach to-day, in spite of its wooded hills, its ships and islands, among the least beautiful of the great sea-ports of the world.

Of diversions the citizens had no lack, for the population was now sufficient to support a good native stage and to attract foreign artists. The year 1825 saw the advent of Italian opera at the Old Park theatre, which stood not far from the present Post Office; and Garcia and Malibran appeared in the "Barber of Seville".[1] It was here that Edwin Forrest was first seen by a New York audience; while fashionable English actors like

[1] *Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, iv., 171, 477.

Macready and the Kembles were among its visitors. But even more interest centred in the Bowery, the great popular theatre built to seat 3,000, where the elder Booth and Forrest played night after night before enthusiastic houses of young and middle-aged artisans and mechanics capable of thunderstorms of applause.

There were other theatres, too, such as Niblo's and Richmond Hill, and to all of these young Whitman presently found his way armed with a pressman's pass. He must have spent many an evening in the city while he was still working for Mr. Spooner, and one unforgettable night, when he was fifteen or so, he was present at a great benefit in the Bowery when Booth played "Richard III."[1] Fifty years later, the scene of that evening remained as clear before his eyes as when he sat in the front of the pit, hanging on every word and gesture of that consummate actor. Inflated and stagy his manner might be; but he revealed to the lad, watching his studied abandonment to passion, a new world of expression. For the first time, he understood how far gestures, and a presence more powerful than words, can express the heights and depths of emotion.

On that night in the Bowery, as upon those memorable nights on the Long Island Beach, and in Morrison's Ballroom, Walt came face to face with one of the supreme mysteries. On these occasions it had been the mystery of Death, which alone brings peace to the heart of passionate love, and the mystery of the Immanent Deity; now it was that other equal mystery, the mystery of Expression, the utterance of the soul in living words and acts and vivid presence. Love and Religion were already significant to him; he had now been shown the meaning of Art.

In the meantime he had begun, as boys will, to take an interest in politics. And before going further, we must glance at the outstanding events and tendencies of the period.

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 13, 14, 426-431.

Those two famous documents, *The Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution of the United States*, are associated respectively with Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton,[1] and represent two currents of political theory which beat against one another through subsequent years. Jefferson was saturated with the political idealism of the school of Rousseau, which sums itself up in the demand for individual liberty and rights, the declaration of individual independence, and freedom from interference.

Hamilton on the other hand—who was by temper an aristocrat, and once at a New York dinner described the people as "a great beast,"[2]—was possessed by the idea of the Nation; he dwelt upon the duty of each member to the whole, promulgating doctrines of solidarity and unity in the cause of a common freedom. The two views are, of course, complementary; their antagonism, if it gave the victory to either, would be fatal to both; and their reconciliation is essential to the life of the Republic. But between their supporters, antagonism has naturally existed.

The ideal of the Jeffersonian Republicans became associated with popular or "Democratic" sentiment,[3] standing as it did in opposition to the more conservative and constitutional position of the Hamiltonian Federalists. For a time the two parties dwelt together in such amity that the Federalists were actually merged with the Republicans; but the uncontested election of Monroe was a signal for the outbreak of the old contest. At the next election,[4] Adams of Massachussetts was returned to the White House; and Jackson of Tennessee, one of the defeated candidates, built up a Democratic party of opposition whose organising centre was New York. On the other side, the followers of Adams and his secretary, Henry Clay, came eventually to be known as Whigs, "Republican" ceasing for a quarter of a century to be a party label.

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*; Bryce, i., 1-31.
[2] Goldwin Smith, *The United States* (1893), 132.
[3] *En. Brit. Suppt.*, and G. Smith. [4] 1824-25.

The titles of the parties serve approximately to indicate their different tendencies; though it must be remembered that the Whiggery of Adams was coloured by New England idealism, while the material interests of the South turned their energies to capture the naturally idealistic Democracy of Jackson. Eventually the division became almost a geographical one; though certain of her interests and perhaps her jealous antipathy to New England, gave New York's sympathies to the South.

In 1832, when Walt was studying the world through the keen eyes of thirteen, and the windows of a Brooklyn printing shop, Democratic South Carolina was offering a stubborn resistance to the Federal tariff. Theoretically, and one may add ethically, any tariff was contrary to the Jeffersonian doctrine of universal freedom; and practically, it was disastrous to the special interests of the South. Carolina, under the poetic fire and genius of Calhoun, was the Southern champion against Northern, or, let us say, Federal aggression. She stood out for the rights of a minority so far as to propose secession. The South was aggrieved by the tariff, for, roughly speaking, its States were cotton plantations, whose interests lay in easy foreign exchange; they grew no corn, they made no machinery, they neither fed nor clothed themselves. The North on the other hand was industrial, anxious to guard its infant manufactures against the competition of Great Britain. The West was agricultural, demanding roads and public works which required the funds provided by a tariff. Now even these public works, these high roads and canals, were calculated directly to benefit the Northern manufacturers rather than the planters of the South whose highway to the West was the great river which had formerly given them all the Western trade to handle, and whose cheapest market for machinery and manufactured goods lay over the high sea whither its own staple was continually going.

The tariff imposed for the benefit of the Northern section was, then, opposed by the South on grounds of industrial necessity as well as of political theory. And it may be noted the argument of the Southerner was equally

he argument of many an artisan in the metropolis, who aw in free trade the sole guarantee of cheap living.

Thus there was a certain antagonism between the interests of the two geographical sections of the American nation; and this was emphasised by another cause or hostility. Every statesman knew that, although unacknowledged, it was really the question of slavery which was already dividing America into "North" and South". And recognising it as beyond his powers of olution, he sought by maintaining a compromise to onceal it from the public mind.

The "Sovereign States," momentarily united for defence against a domineering king, had at the same hour een swept by Tom Paine's and Jefferson's versions of he French Republicanism, and North and South alike dhered to a doctrinaire equality. The negro, they were illing to agree, should be voluntarily and gradually mancipated.

But the hold of this policy on the South was soon fterwards undermined by the economic development hich followed the introduction of the cotton-gin. The ew and rapidly growing prosperity of the planter deended on the permanence of the "institution". And om this time forward the Southern policy becomes ard to distinguish from the vested interests of the lave-owner. The prosperity of the South seemed to epend upon the extension of the cotton industry: the otton industry, again, upon slave-labour; thus it was rgued, the institution of slavery was necessary to the rosperity of the South. The North, so the Southerner pposed, had its own interests to serve, and only rearded the South as a market. It was, he felt, jealous f the dominance of Southern statesmanship in the nion; and its desire to destroy "the institution" was enounced as the sectional jealousy of small-minded, hop-keeping bigots, of inferior antecedents. By the ute force of increasing numbers, by a vulgar love of ade, and the accidents of climate and of mineral reources, the North was beginning to establish its hold

upon Congress, and arrogating to itself the Federal power.

Hitherto, with the exception of the Adamses and of Jackson, every President had been of Virginian birth or bred, the Southerner declared, in the broader views of statesmanship. But the North was now predominant in the House of Representatives, and a balance could only be preserved in the Senate, where each State appoints two members, by constant watchfulness. Thus the rapid settling of the middle West by Northerners must be balanced by the annexation of new cotton-growing regions in the South-west. The famous Missouri Compromise of 1821 fixed the frontier between future free soil and slave States at the line of the southern boundary of Missouri, while admitting that State itself into the Union as a member of the latter class. Hence it was only in the South-west that slavery could develop, and extension by conquest of cotton territory became hence forward an object of Southern politicians.

While, then, it was the aggression of the South which finally drove the nation into civil war, the South for many years had viewed itself as an aggrieved partner in the inter-State compact, victimised in the interests of the majority. It felt, perhaps not unjustly, that it was being overridden, and that the Federation was becoming what Jefferson described as "a foreign yoke".[1] It became excessively sensitive to hostility: every rumour of the spread of Abolition sentiment in the North—sentiment which favoured a new attitude towards the Federal power, and would give control to it over the domestic affairs of what hitherto had literally been "Sovereign States"—raised a storm of indignation and evoked new threats of secession.

But while slavery was already playing its part in American politics it had not yet become the main line of party cleavage. Although the party of free trade and State rights was the party of the South, it was not yet

[1] *Cf. Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 375, 376.

the party of slavery. It was still throughout America the "people's party," and the slave power was the last to desire that it should cease to hold that title, especially in the North. For many a year to come there would be stout Abolitionists who could call themselves Democrats; while "dough-faces," or politicians who served the party of slavery, were always to be found amongst the Whigs.

Even while party feeling ran high, the increase of the means of communication and the introduction of steam transport, both on land and water, favoured the larger Federal sentiment and quickened the national consciousness. Talk of secession had been heard in New England as well as in South Carolina; but actual secession became more difficult as the manufacturers of the East, the cotton-growers of the South, and the farmers of the Mississippi basin had tangible evidence of the many interests and privileges which were common to them, and beheld more and more clearly the future upon which America was entering. Year by year the idea of the Union gained in vitality; and in spite of party feeling, President Jackson had a nation behind him when he refused to yield to South Carolina's threat of secession.

A compromise was effected, and Carolina submitted to the collection of duties under a somewhat mitigated tariff: the relation of the constituent States to the Federal power remaining still undefined, waiting, for a generation to come, upon the growth of national sentiment on the one hand, and the accumulation of resentment upon the other.

CHAPTER III

TEACHER AND JOURNALIST

THE spring of 1836 found Whitman in New York. He was in his seventeenth year, had now learnt his trade, and had begun to write for the weekly papers among others, contributing occasionally to the handsome and aristocratic pages of the *Mirror*, perhaps the best of its class.[2] He lived in that journalistic atmosphere which encourages expression and turns many a clever lad into a prig. Walt was self-sufficient, but there was nothing of the prig[3] in him. Limited as his schooling had been, he was naturally receptive and thoughtful, and his education went steadily forward; he made friends with older men, and with men of education from whom he learnt much. And now he became a teacher.

He was a healthy boy, but had somewhat overgrown his strength, and perhaps this was among the causes of his leaving the city in May, and going up Long Island into the country. He joined his family for awhile, who were living at Norwich;[4] and subsequently settled for the winter as a country teacher at Babylon, boarding round, as was the custom, in the homes of his various pupils.

The little town of Babylon stands on the swampy inner shores of the Great South Bay, which is a spacious lagoon separated from the Atlantic by a narrow beach

[1] MSS. Harned. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 187.
[3] *Whit. Fellowship*, '94 (Traubel). [4] MSS. Harned.

WHITMAN'S BIRTHPLACE FROM THE FARM-YARD, 1904

r line of sand hills. This outer beach bears here and here a ridge of pine forest or a lighthouse; but for the st, it is abandoned to sea-birds and grass, to the winds nd a few sand-flowers scattered among the wind mark-ngs which are stencilled in purple upon the sand in ome delicate aerial deposit. Outside, even upon quiet ays, the surf beats ponderously with ominous sound, he will and weight of the ocean in its swing. Within, cross the wide unruffled waters of the lagoon, populous ith sails, is the far-away fringe of the Babylon woods, nd over them, pale and blue, the hill-range above Huntington.

The bay itself is a glorious mirror for the over-glow f the sky at sunset or sunrise. Standing upon its inner im at Babylon, as the colour begins to die into the usk, you may see mysterious sails moving by hidden waterways among fields still merry with the chirrup of nnumerable crickets; while beyond the rattle of cords nd pulleys and the liquid murmur of the moving boats, eyond their lights that pierce the darkening water like ewelled spears, glimmers a star on Fire Island beach to greet the great liners as they pass by. In summer it is a ield of many harvests; famous for its blue-fish, its clams nd oysters; and neither the lads of Babylon nor their young master were behind-hand in spearing eels, catch-ng crabs and gathering birds' eggs.[1] In a hard winter t is frozen over for months together.

For the greater part of the next four or five years, Walt remained in the country, moving about from place to place, and paying occasional visits to New York. He is said to have been a good and popular teacher;[2] and f his equipment was not great, it was sufficient; he iked boys and had the gift of imparting knowledge. He took his work seriously, was always master in the schoolroom, and knew whatever passed there. He followed methods of his own; breaking loose from text-

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 7-9.
[2] *Whit. Fellowship*, '94 (C. A. Roe); Johnston, 114.

books, to expound his knowledge and impart his own interests to his scholars. The element of personality told throughout his teaching; already it was notable as the power behind all that he did. An impression of himself, of his universal kindliness, of the sympathetic quality of his whole person, his voice and look and manner, and of a certain distinction and dignity inseparable from him, was retained by his pupils in after years.

His favourite method of punishment is worth recording, as characteristic of his power and of his theory of pedagogics. An admirable story-teller, he would chastise any scholar who had behaved dishonourably, by describing his conduct to the whole school, and without the mention of a name, the guilty boy or girl was sufficiently self-condemned and punished in his own shame. Graver offences were made more public.

In recess and away from school, Walt was a sheer boy, heartily joining in the most boisterous games and sharing every kind of recreation consistent with his kindly spirit. "Gunning" was never included.

Among the scholars there must often have been those of his own years, and the fact that he could preserve his status as a teacher while living on terms of frank comradeship with his scholars, declares him born to the office. They were mixed schools which he taught, and towards the girls his attitude was one of honest equanimity. He was the same with them as with the boys, betraying neither a sentimental preference nor a masculine disdain. Perhaps American girls with their friendly ways and comparative lack of self-consciousness, call for less fortitude on the young teacher's part than some others; but Walt's own temperament stood him in good stead. It seems improbable that he was ever subject either to green-sickness or calf-love, and he was no sentimentalist.[1]

Perhaps the idleness of which Mr. Spooner retained so lively a recollection, might have hindered his becom-

[1] *Whit. Fellowship* (Roe); *In re*, 34.

ıg an ideal dominie. His thoughts must sometimes ıve been far afield, his pupils and their tasks forgotten. was not, as I have already suggested, that he was zy; he worked hard and fast when his mind was pon his work, and best of all perhaps as a teacher ı contact with human beings; but he was never so usy that he could refuse to pursue an idea, never so cupied that he could miss a new fact or emotion.

Like other young teachers, Walt probably learnt at ast as much as he taught, if not from his pupils, then om their parents. Boarding with them, he came to now and to love his own people, the peasant-yeomanry f the island.[1]

He was a favourite with the friendly Long Island uths and girls of his own years, but his closer friendıips seem to have been with older people: the well-ılanced, but strongly marked fathers and mothers of milies. He loved the country too, and all the occupaons and amusements of the open-air, into which he ad been initiated as a child. Thus he learned his land by heart, wandering over it on foot, by day and ight; sailing its coasts and out into the waters beyond, ı pilot and fishing boats, to taste for himself the brave a life of those old salts, Williamses and Kossabones, is mother's ancestors.

In the spring of 1838, we find him again at Huntingn; and here, in June,[2] he founded a weekly journal, ıe *Long Islander*, which is still published. Full of ıterests, self-sufficient and ready with his pen, and in ose touch with his readers, he conducted the paper for while with success. He was nineteen and an enıusiast; and he was both printer, editor and publisher. Like others of the time, his paper was probably a umble sheet of four small pages, and his task was not heavy as it may sound. He thoroughly enjoyed the ork, as well he might: the new responsibility and

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 10, 11, 521.
[2] *Ib.*, 10, 11, 188; Thomson, 476; Burroughs (*a*), 28.

independence were admirably suited to his years an temper. He purchased a press and type, and his print ing house was in the upper story of what is now a stabl which stood on the main street of the town.

There he did most of the work himself, but I hav talked with an old man who shared his task at time And not his task only; for the printing room was, w may be sure, the scene of much beside labour. Wal loved companionship, and was an excellent story-teller he loved games, especially whist, which he would pla —and generally win—for a pumpkin pie. But when h worked, he "worked like the mischief," as the saying is and when he said so his companions knew that the must go. They must have recognised, if they thoug about him at all in that way, that while he made no di play of his knowledge he knew far more than they, an while he was an excellent comrade, it would not do t treat Walt with too great familiarity.

As to his talk, it was clean and wholesome and self respecting. He was too much of a man already t resort to the mannish tricks of many youths. He ha moreover, at this time, a tinge of Puritanism, which d him no harm: he neither smoked nor drank nor swore He contemned practical jokes. Maybe there was les of Puritanism about him than of personal pride. H was himself from the beginning, belonged to no set, an went his own ways. He seemed to be everywhere a to observe everything without obtruding himself any where. And having purchased a horse, he carried th papers round to the doors of his readers in the sur rounding townships. Often, afterwards, he recalle those long romantic drives along the glimmering road through the still fields and the dark oak woods unde the half-luminous starry sky, broken by friendly fac and kind greetings.

But before the year was out the appearance of th *Long Islander* became more and more irregular, till th patience of its owner and subscribers was exhauste

[1] *Whit. Fellowship*, '94 (Traubel).

In the spring it ceased for a time, and when it reappeared it was numbered as a fresh venture under new management.

Walt had gone back to school teaching at Babylon.[1] He continued this work for two years more, wandering from place to place, now at the Jamaica Academy, now at Woodbury, now at Whitestone. He was, at this time, a keen debater and politician, an Abolitionist, a Washingtonian teetotaler, and ardently opposed to capital punishment. He took an active share in the stump oratory of 1840, when Van Buren of New York was for the second time the Democratic nominee for President. The fact, with the knowledge he always showed of the art of oratory, and the plans for lecturing which he afterwards drafted, seems to testify to a native capacity for public speaking, as well as a genuine and serious interest in the affairs of the nation.

Walt Whitman was becoming recognised as a young man of ability: in spite of his nonchalant and friendly unassuming ways, he had pride and ambition. He felt in himself that he was capable of great things, and that it was time to begin them. Not very clear as to what his proper work might be, he took the turning of his inclination, and early in the summer of 1841 entered the office of the *New World*, as a compositor,[2] to become for the next twenty years one of the fraternity of New York pressmen.

His first success was achieved in the August number of the *Democratic Review*, one of the first American periodicals of the day, which counted among its contributors such writers as Bryant, Whittier, Hawthorne and Longfellow. His "Death in the Schoolroom," [3] appearing over the initials of "W. W.," caught the public fancy, and was widely copied by the provincial press. It is the study of a gruesome incident in Long Island country life; by turns sentimental and violent in its horror, and evidently intended as an argument against school flog-

[1] MSS. Harned. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Comp. Prose*, 336.

ging. It has a sort of crude power and its subject matter would have appealed to Hawthorne. It is by no means discreditable; but to us it seems verbose, and it is clumsy in its exaggerated style. Lugare is shown to us at one moment standing as though transfixed by a basilisk—and at another, "every limb quivers like the tongue of a snake".

Whatever its faults, they did not offend the taste of the hour: the Review welcomed his contributions, and some study from his pen appeared in its pages each alternate month throughout the next year, some being signed "Walter Whitman" in full. To the *New World* he had meanwhile been contributing conventional and very mediocre verses in praise of Death and of compassionate Pity.[1]

The remorse of a young murderer; an angel's compassionate excuses for evil-doers; the headstrong revolt of youth against parental injustice, and the ensuing tragic fate; the half-insane repulsion of a father toward his son, prompting him to send the lad to a madhouse and thus wrecking his mind; the refusal of a young poet to sell his genius; the pining of a lover after the death of his beloved; the lonely misery of a deaf and dumb girl, who has been seduced and deserted; the reform of a profligate by a child; the sobering of a drunkard at his little sister's death-bed; and an old widow's strewing of flowers on every grave because her husband's remains unknown: such are the subjects with which he dealt.[2] His wanderings in Long Island had supplied him with incidents upon which to exercise his imagination. Those which he selected have always some pathetic interest, while several have an obviously didactic purpose.

Whitman's moral consciousness was still predominant: he was an advocate of "causes". But his morality sprang out of a real passion for humanity, which took the form of sentiment; a sentiment which was

[1] *New World*, Nov. 20, Dec. 18, 1841.
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 340-370; *Democratic Review*, etc.

thoroughly genuine at bottom, but which in its expression at this time, became false and stilted enough to bear the reproach of sentimentality. In view of their author's subsequent optimism, it is interesting to note that all these studies are of figures or incidents, more or less tragic.

Whitman was puzzling over the ultimate questions: the problem of evil, as seen in the sufferings inflicted by tyrannical power, and by callous or lustful selfishness, upon innocent victims; on the inscrutable tragedies of disease and insanity; and again, upon the power of innocence, of sorrow and of love to evoke the good which he saw everywhere latent in human nature, and which a blind and heavy-handed legalitarian justice would destroy with the evil inseparable from it. The more he thought over these problems, the more he recognised the futility of condemnation, and the effectiveness of understanding love.

The *New World*, upon which he was working, published the first American versions of some of the principal novels of the day; it reprinted several of the new poems of Tennyson from English sources and contained long notices of such works as Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-worship*. In November, 1842, it issued as an extra number Dickens's *American Notes*, the sensation of the hour—the author having been *fêted* at the Park Theatre in February—and announced Lytton Bulwer's *Last of the Barons* to follow. On the 23rd of the month, in the same fashion, appeared *Franklin Evans, or The Inebriate*, a tale of the times, by Walter Whitman. It was advertised as a thrilling romance by "one of the best novelists in this country"; and the proprietors of the magazine expressed their hope that the well-told incidents of the plot and the excellence of the moral would commend the book to general circulation. Nor were they disappointed. It is said that twenty thousand copies were sold. The book, then, achieved a tolerable success, and its author profited to the extent of some forty pounds.

Copies of *Franklin Evans* are now excessively rare,

and one may say with confidence they will remain so. For the tale will never be reprinted. It claims to be written for the people and not for the critics, and even the people are unlikely to read it a second time.

It is an ill-told rambling story of a Long Island lad who, going to the metropolis and taking to drink, falls through various stages of respectability till he becomes a bar-tender. He marries and reforms, but presently gives way again to his habit; his wife then dies, and he falls lower. Eventually he is rescued from gaol, and signs the "old" pledge against ardent spirits. Then he goes to Virginia, where he succeeds in fuddling his wits with wine, and marries a handsome Creole slave. Forthwith he becomes entangled with a white woman who drives his wife to the verge of madness, until a tragic fate releases him from them both, and the story concludes with his signature to the pledge of total abstinence. The author recommends it to his readers, and breaks out into praises of the Washingtonian crusade, foretelling its imminent and complete victory over the "armies of drink".

The pages are diversified by Indian and other narratives impertinent to the plot, and by invectives against the scornful attitude of the pious and respectable toward those who are struggling in the nets of vice. The whole book is loosely graphic and frankly didactic, its author declaring his wish to be improving, though he will keep the amusement of his readers in view. He opines that in this temperance story he has found a novel and a noble use for fiction, and if his first venture be successful, be assured it will be followed by a second.

It is difficult to treat *Franklin Evans* seriously. That Whitman was at the time a sincere advocate of the more extreme doctrines of temperance reform can hardly be doubted. But in after years—the whole incident having become a matter of amusement to its author, not wholly unmingled with irritation when, as sometimes, it was thrust upon him anew by reformers as ardent as he had once been—he would laugh and say with a droll deliberation that the story was written against

time one hot autumn in a Broadway beer-cellar, his dull thoughts encouraged by bubbling libations. One suspects a humorous malice in the anecdote, belonging rather to his later than his earlier years. It may be noted, however, that while Whitman commended the pledge, he also commended a positive policy of "counter attraction" to all the young men who scanned his pages, to wit, an early marriage and a home, though he himself remained a bachelor.

Franklin Evans was honest enough. Young Whitman was serving the adorable Lady Temperance with fervour, if not with absolute consistency. He knew her cause to be a good one; but he found that, in this form, it was not quite his own, and he was too natural not to be inconsistent. He had not yet come to his own cause, nor for that matter to himself. And thus his essay became a *tour de force;* as he did not repeat it, we may suppose he was as little satisfied as those who now waste an hour upon this "thrilling romance".

He was now in the full stream of journalistic activity. He wrote for the *New York Sun*, and appears for a few months to have acted as editor in succession of the *Aurora* and the *Tattler*.[1] In 1843 he filled the same post on the *Statesman*, and the year after upon the *Democrat;* while contributing also to the *Columbian Magazine*, the *American Review*, and Poe's *Broadway Journal*.[2]

Probably none of these contributions are worthy of recollection. Anomalous as it may sound, from twenty-three to thirty-five Whitman was better fitted for an editor than for an essayist. He was clever without being brilliant; he had capacity but no special and definite line of his own. His strength lay in his judgment; and upon this both friends and family learnt to rely.

Several of the papers for which he wrote were party organs; it may have been that his political services in 1840 won him an introduction to the editors of the

[1] MSS. Harned; *Comp. Prose*, 188. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 12, 196.

Democratic Review, and helped him on his further way. In any case, it is certain that he frequented the party's headquarters in the city. Tammany Hall was named after an Indian brave,[1] presumably to indicate the wholly indigenous character of its interests. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, it seems to have become the seat of a society of old Knickerbockers, gathered partly for mutual protection against certain groups of foreign immigrants who had shown a hostile disposition, and partly in opposition to the aristocratic Cincinnati Society presided over by Washington. During Jefferson's Presidency it became a political centre, and was identified with the Democratic party from the time of its reorganisation under Jackson in New York State.

The Democrats failed to elect Van Buren, and were in opposition from 1840 to 1844. During the electoral struggle, a Baltimore journal had spoken slightingly of the humble character of Harrison, the Whig candidate: "better fitted, it pronounced, for a Western log-cabin and a small pension than for the White House. Harrison, like Andrew Jackson, was an old soldier: he had beaten the Indians long ago in a fight at Tippecanoe, and that, together with the simplicity of this Cincinnatus —the imaginary log-cabin, the coon-skins and hard cider, which made him the impersonation of the frontiersman to whom America owed so much, being all artfully exaggerated by party managers—caught the fancy of the whole country, which rang for months together with the refrain of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too". Harrison died immediately after his inauguration and Vice-president Tyler took his place.

In Tammany's back parlour, Walt made the acquaintance of many notables, and not least, of an old Colonel Fellowes,[3] who loved to discuss Tom Paine over a social glass, and to scatter to the four winds the legends of inebriety which had gathered about his later years of poverty and neglect. But that Whitman was a violent

[1] *New York Mirror* (1833), 87. *Cf.* Larned.
[2] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 389.
[3] *Comp. Prose*, 90.

partisan even at this time, seems to be disproved by the fact that in 1843 or 1844 he contributed political verses to Horace Greeley's *Tribune*, a paper which had grown out of the Whig election sheet.[1] And though, like his father, he adhered now and always to the general political tradition of the Democrats, was a free trader, jealous of the central power, and voted with his party till it split in 1848, he was as good an Abolitionist as Greeley himself. Indeed, both the *Tribune* poems are inspired by the theme of slavery, and as if in witness to the reality of their inspiration, he breaks for the first time into the irregular metres he was to make his own.[2]

A religious ardour breathes from these singular Scriptural utterances. The first, "Blood-money," is a homily on the text, "Guilty of the body and the blood of Christ". In the slave, whom he describes as "hunted from the arrogant equality of the rest," he sees the new incarnation of that "divine youth" whose body Iscariot sold and is still a-selling. It is an admirable piece of pathos, fresh, direct and unmannered, and by far the most individual and striking thing Whitman had done. And it was the only one which could be regarded as prophetic of the work that was to follow. Especially is this felt in such lines as

> The cycles, with their long shadows, have stalked silently forward,
> Since those ancient days; many a pouch enwrapping meanwhile
> Its fee, like that paid for the son of Mary.

The piece was signed "Paumanok," as also was "A Dough-face Song," which appeared in the *Evening Post*.

The second of the *Tribune* poems, "Wounded in the House of Friends,"[3] is inferior to the first in poetic merit, though adopting a somewhat similar medium. It is a rather violent denunciation of those intimates of freedom whose allegiance to her can be bought off—"a dollar dearer to them than Christ's blessing"—elderly "dough-faces" whose hearts are in their purses. It was upon Northern traitors to the cause rather than upon the people of the South, that Whit-

[1] *Mem. Hist.*, iv., 157. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 372. [3] *Ib.*, 273.

man poured out his indignation: and this position he always maintained. The *Tribune* itself was at the time an ardent supporter of Clay's candidature for the Presidency; but Clay subsequently trimmed upon this very question, and this action, by alienating the anti-slavery party in New York, resulted in his defeat at the polls.

Whitman's political poems suggest already that loosening of ties which separated him a few years later from the main body of his party; but in 1844, following the lead of advanced Democrats like W. C. Bryant, he worked actively for Polk, the party candidate, who became President.[1] We cannot too often remind ourselves that the later Republicanism of the 'sixties was supported by men who had been Free-soil Democrats as well as by certain of their Whig opponents. Meanwhile, it was to the Radical wing of his party that young Whitman belonged.

Though engaged in the political struggle, he was by no means absorbed in it. His profession encouraged his natural interest in the affairs of his country, but not in the political affairs alone. He shared in the social functions of the city and its district. He frequented lectures and races, churches and auction rooms, weddings and clam-bakes.[2] He spent Saturday afternoons on the bare and then unfrequented sand ridge of Coney Island, bathing, reading and declaiming aloud, uninterrupted by a single one of the hundreds of thousands who now fill the island with their more artificial holiday making and their noisier laughter. In those days one did not require a costume to bathe on Coney Island beach.

Nearer than Coney Island, Brooklyn Ferry was always one of his favourite haunts.[3] Walt had always loved the boat as well as the river; as a child he had seen the horses in the round-house give place to the engine with its high "smoke-stack"; the captain and the hands were old friends, and he never tired of watching

[1] Bucke, 23. [2] *Ib.*, 21. [3] *Comp. Prose*, 11.

he passengers. Who does not feel the delight of such ferry, the swing of the boat, the windy gleam in the ky, the lights by day or night upon the water, the ense of weariless and unceasing movement as of life tself? New York, on its island, is richer than most ities in these river crossings, which take you at once ut of the closeness and cares of the streets into the free road roadways of wind and water, roadways which you an scarcely traverse without some enlargement and beration of the city-pent soul in your breast.

And in the city itself he had a thousand interests;[1] e went wherever people met together for any purpose; e had a critic's free pass to the theatres and was often t the opera and circus, he frequented the public libraries oo, and the collections of antiquities; but most of all he oved to read in the open book of Broadway. Up and own that amazing torrent of humanity he would ride, reasting its flood, upon the box-seat of one of the tages, beside the driver. From time to time he would ake himself useful by giving change to the fares ithin, when he was not already too fully occupied eclaiming the great passages from his favourite poets nto the ears of his friend.

The fulness of human life surging through the artery f that great city exhilarated him like the west wind or he sound and presence of the sea. The sheer contact vith the crowd excited him. And though he came to now New York in all its dark and sordid corners—and ven an American city before the war was not without s shame—he won an inspiration from its multitudinous umanity distinct from any that the country-side could fford. Every year he grew more conscious of his nembership in the living whole of human life; and the onsciousness which brought despair to Carlyle, brought uith and glory to Whitman. He did not blink the ugly nd sinister aspects of things, as many an optimist has one; he saw clearly the brothel, the prison, and the ortuary; his writing at this time, as we have seen,

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 11-14, 426, 519.

deals largely with the tragedies of life; but humanity fascinated him—not an abstract or ideal humanity, but the concrete actual humanity of New York. For its own sake he loved it, body and soul, as a man should. It was not philanthropy, it was the wholesome, native love of a man for his own flesh and blood, for the incarnation of the Other in the same substance as the Self.

Very little passed in the city without his knowledge. He was in the crowd that welcomed Dickens in 1842; and was doubtless among the thousands who celebrated the introduction of the first water from the Croton supply into New York, and hailed the pioneer locomotive arriving over the new track from Buffalo. Among the public figures of the day, he became familiar with the faces of great politicians like Webster and Clay; among writers, he saw Fitz-Green Halleck and Fenimore Cooper,[2] and made the acquaintance of Poe who was struggling against poverty in New York, and who became at this time—1845—suddenly famous through the publication of "The Raven";[3] and won the more lasting friendship of Bryant, who was at that time the pre-eminent American poet, and held besides the editorship of the *Evening Post*, to which Walt had been a contributor.[4]

In February, 1846, Whitman was appointed editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*,[5] a democratic journal of a single sheet. The office was close to the Ferry, and he seems at this time to have lived with his family on Myrtle Avenue, near Fort Greene, rather more than a mile away. His editorials boasted no literary distinction and were even at times of doubtful grammar; but they were direct and vigorous, and discussed all the topics of the hour.[6] When a New York Episcopal Church was consecrated with much ceremony and display, he would denounce the self-complacent attitude of the Churches; every instance of lynching or of capital punishment

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 11. [2] *Ib.*, 11, 12. [3] *Alibone's Dict.*
[4] *Comp. Prose*, 196. [5] MSS. Harned. [6] *Atlantic Monthly*, xcii., 679.

would call forth his protest; he was faithful in his support of the rights of domestic animals; he approved of dancing within reasonable hours, and he advocated art in the homes of the people. Largely owing to his persistent advocacy the old battle-ground of Fort Greene was secured to Brooklyn as a park.

In dealing with the immediately critical question of relations with Mexico, while he anticipated extension of territory without dismay, he uttered his warning against the temper which prompts a nation to aggressive acts. "We fear," he said,[1] "our unmatched strength may make us insolent. We fear that we shall be too willing (holding the game in our own hands) to revenge our injuries by war—the greatest curse that can befall a people, and the bitterest obstacle to the progress of all those high and true reforms that make the glory of this age above the darkness of the ages past and gone."

The admission of Texas into the Union, in 1845, was soon followed by a war with Mexico, which eventually completed the filibustering work of Houston by the annexation of New Mexico and California. This territorial expansion was pushed forward, as we noted before, by Polk and the Democrats in the interests of the South;[2] but the fact that it was Wilmot, a Free-soil Democrat, who introduced the celebrated proviso to an appropriation of money for the war, proposing to exclude slavery from all territory which might be acquired from Mexico, reminds us of the division within the party which resulted in a split two years later.

The country at this time was in a condition of feverish irritation; and the war spirit was only too easily aroused. In 1847, it threatened to burst into flame over a territorial dispute with Great Britain. America claimed the latitude of 54·40 as the northern boundary of Oregon, and for awhile, under the jingo President, the country rang with the insane alliterative cry of "fifty-four forty or fight".[3] A spirited foreign policy

[1] *Atlantic Monthly*, xcii., 686. [2] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 397, 398.
[3] *Ib.*, 399.

is the universal panacea of the charlatan; it is his receipt for every internal disorder, and it was continually being prescribed to America during the next fifteen years. This was indeed the charlatan's hour, when the official policy of the dominant Democratic party oscillated between jingoism and what was afterwards known throughout America as "squatter sovereignty" It was the repudiation of the Wilmot proviso, and the adoption of the new doctrine which Douglas afterwards made his own, that drove Whitman into revolt.

He was comfortably seated in his editorial chair, where he might have remained for years had his Radical convictions permitted. Though the owners of the *Eagle* were orthodox party men, the editor's anti-slavery attitude was not concealed,[1] and indeed could not be. Their criticism of his editorials caused him immediately to throw up his post. He would not compromise on the question, and he would not brook interference. It was January, 1848, when he left the *Eagle*,[2] and a few weeks later he was making his way south to New Orleans.

Whitman had joined the "Barnburners" or Van Buren men of New York State, who now became Free-soil Democrats, making the Wilmot proviso their platform,[3] in opposition to the "Hunkers," who denounced it. As to the Whigs, they burked the whole matter, and contrived in their nominating convention to silence the question by shouting. The Democratic party found its real platform in the nostrum of "squatter sovereignty," the specious doctrine that in each new State the citizens should themselves decide upon their attitude towards slavery, deciding for or against it when drawing up a Constitution. To this, Lewis Cass, its candidate for the Presidency, subscribed. But the "Barnburners" put forward Van Buren, a former President, and a Democrat of the school of Jefferson.

[1] *Atlantic Monthly*, xcii., 683, 684. [2] MSS. Harned.
[3] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 399; *Comp. Prose*, 188.

nd Jackson, who was also supported by the "anti-lavery" party. His policy was to confine slavery within its actual limits: "no more Slave states, no more slave territory". As a consequence of the Democratic split in the Empire State, the thirty-six electoral votes of New York were given to the Whig candidate, General Taylor, the Mexican conqueror, and he became the next President.

A whole-hearted Free-soil Democrat, Whitman's position as editor of an orthodox party journal had naturally become untenable.

CHAPTER IV

ROMANCE (1848)

WHITMAN was nearly twenty-nine, and had not, so far as I can discover, wandered beyond the limits of his own State,[1] nor had he experienced, to our knowledge, any serious affair of the heart. The only trace of strong personal emotion in his writing hitherto is that which we found in the *Tribune* poems, dictated by the passion of human solidarity. "Blood Money" is probably the only thing which he had yet produced from the deeper regions of consciousness; it is the only piece of real self-revelation which he had yet confided to the world. Now we come suddenly upon a time of wandering, over which he himself has drawn a veil—a veil which covers, we cannot for a moment doubt, one of the most important incidents of his life. But it is a veil which we are unable to raise.[2]

Walking in the lobby of the old Broadway Theatre, between the acts, one February night,[3] Whitman was introduced to a Southern gentleman. A quarter of an hour later he had engaged to go South, to assist in starting the *Crescent*, a daily paper in New Orleans. On the eleventh of the month he set out.[4] The South was as unknown to him as it still remains to the majority of Northerners; and the South must have been as strange and fascinating to the son of Mannhatta as are the shores of the Mediterranean to a Londoner. An

[1] Descriptions of Virginia in *Franklin Evans* being probably derived from hearsay.

[2] Camden, xxxv. [3] *Comp. Prose*, 14, 188, 522. [4] MSS. Harned.

ir of romance seems to breathe from his every reference
o this period, and it may well be that the passionate
ttraction which afterwards drew his memory to the
magnet-south" had some personal incarnation.

Bidding a hasty good-bye to his family and friends,
e left New York and made his way[1] through populous
ennsylvania, and over the Alleghanies to Wheeling on
he Ohio river, where he found a small steamer, and in
descended leisurely, with many stops by the way,
hrough the recently settled lands of Ohio, Indiana,
Kentucky, and Illinois, into the Mississippi, the Father
f Waters, thenceforward pursuing his voyage for more
han a thousand miles along that greatest of American
ighways, to the borders of the Mexican Gulf.

For the first time his eyes saw how vast was his
ountry: he realised the South, and he understood the
ignificance of the political struggle for the control of
he new West. He was almost afraid as he journeyed,
ot so much at the immensity of the prospect, as be-
ause he felt himself upon the verge of the Unknown
nd its mysteries: and his feelings found utterance in
ome verses written on the voyage and subsequently
ublished—surely, with a smile at the critics—in his
ollected Prose. As they illustrate his mood at the time,
nd afford the best example of his skill as a maker of
onventional verses, I may quote from them here.

After describing the fantastic forms which line the
argins of the forest-bordered river, he proceeds:—

> Tide of youth, thus thickly planted,
> While in the eddies onward you swim,
> Thus on the shore stands a phantom army,
> Lining for ever the channel's rim.
>
> Steady, helmsman! you guide the immortal;
> Many a wreck is beneath you piled,
> Many a brave yet unwary sailor
> Over these waters has been beguiled.
>
> Nor is it the storm or the scowling midnight,
> Cold, or sickness, or fire's dismay—
> Nor is it the reef or treacherous quicksand
> Will peril you most on your twisted way.

[1] Burroughs, 82.

> But when there comes a voluptuous languor,
> Soft the sunshine, silent the air,
> Bewitching your craft with safety and sweetness,
> Then, young pilot of life, beware.[1]

The lines are not of the best, but they are suggestive. They seem to express the lurking fear of one hardily bred in the North, when first he feels upon his face the breath of the seductive South. His strenuous self-sufficiency is imperilled. A strange world of sensations surrounds him, awakening in himself a world of emotions as strange. It is suggested to him that he is not quite the man that he supposed, that there is another side to his character, and he resents the suggestion. For who will willingly begin over again the task of self-discovery? The conservative organising active Ego fears the awakening of the adventurous, receptive Ego. I think Whitman was startled as he realised how little as yet he understood himself, or was willing to accept his whole soul if it should rise up and face him.

The New Orleans of '48 must have been the most romantic and perhaps the most prosperous city in the Union. It was the centre of Western commerce, as well as of Mexican filibustering: its great hotels, the St. Charles and the St. Louis, were the rendezvous of planters and merchants, politicians and adventurers, and of the proudest aristocracy in the States.[2] It was a gay city, with its Creole women and Spanish men, its dancing and its play, its masks and dominoes, its duels and carnivals; gay as only an old city can be gay, with the contrast between age and youth.

About the Catholic cathedral was a mass of irregular red-tiled roofs and a net-work of shady alleys, on to which opened great galleries and courtyards full of vines. Scent of roses and the caressing sound of Creole singing stole upon the languorous breaths of the warm humid air, breaths which lazily stirred the golden-rod that overgrew the dormer windows, the old venetian

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 374; see also Rejected Passages in Camden.
[2] *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to N. O.*, 1885.

NEW ORLEANS ABOUT THE TIME OF WHITMAN'S VISIT, FROM A PRINT

blinds, the geraniums and the clothes hanging in the sun. Along the alleys went the priests in their black skirts. Through the doorways one saw red floors sanded and clean, and quaint carved furniture, heirlooms of generations; or caught a glimpse of some old garden with its fountains and lilies, its violets and jonquils, myrtle and jessamine. Everywhere flowers and singing birds, and the soft quaint Creole phrases falling with the charm that only Southern lips confer.

Such was the old French quarter. Along the river-side was another; the lawless world of Mississippi flat-boatmen, a vagrant population drawn from many States, who with the soldiers discharged after the Mexican war frequented the low saloons and gaming-houses; passionate men, capable of any crime or adventure.

Again, there were the Bohemians of the city, the artists, journalists and actors of a centre of fashion. Opera had found its first American home at New Orleans, and was presented at the famous Orleans Theatre four times a week. Whitman, the opera-goer, must often have been there. Perhaps he met among the Bohemians a juvenile member of their group, Dolores Adios Fuertes, a young dancer, to be known hereafter in London and in Paris as Adah Isaacs Menken, actress, and authoress of a pathetic volume of irregular metres, who now lies buried at Mont Parnasse.

During the three months of his stay, Whitman saw New Orleans thoroughly.[1] Often on Sunday mornings he would go to the cathedral; he idled much in the old French quarters, and sauntered and loafed along the levees, making acquaintances and friends among the boatmen and stevedores. He frequented the huge bar-rooms of the two hotels, where most of the business of the city seems at that time to have been transacted; but temperate and simple himself, he preferred to their liqueurs and dainties his morning coffee and biscuit at the stall of a stout mulatto woman, who stood with her

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 251, 439-443; Bucke, 24.

shining copper kettle in the French market. There all the races of the world seemed to be gathered to idle or to bargain. He went also to the theatres, where he talked with the soldiers back from the Mexican war; among the rest, with General Taylor, soon to be President, a jovial, genial, laughter-loving old man, one of the plainest who ever went to the White House, where he died soon after his inauguration in 1849.

Whitman appears to have been thoroughly enjoying himself, when suddenly about the end of May, he made up his mind to return to the North. His brother Jeff, a lad of fifteen, who had accompanied him and was working in the printing office, was homesick and out of health; the climate with its malarial tendencies did not suit him. Walt was always devoted to this young brother, who had been his companion on many a Long Island holiday, tramping or sailing,[1] and becoming alarmed at his condition, hurried him away. There were other reasons which, he says, made him wish to leave the city, but as he does not specify[2] them himself, we can only follow the indications in guessing at their nature. We know they were not connected with his work: it is probable that they were private and personal.[3]

When asked in later years why he had never married, he would say either that it was impossible to give a satisfactory explanation,[4] although such an explanation might perhaps exist, or he would declare that, with an instinct for self-preservation, he had always avoided or escaped from entanglements which threatened his freedom.[5] These replies he made with an obvious reticence and reservation. He who professed to make so clean a breast of his own shortcomings, and who in his last years required that records of himself should err in being somewhat over personal, deliberately concealed certain important incidents in his life. There can, I

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 514. [2] *Ib.*, 441.
[3] See Appendix B. [4] *In re*, 323. [5] Bucke, 60.

think, be only one interpretation of this singular state of affairs: that these incidents concerned others equally with himself, and that those others were unwilling to have them published. If they had been his, and his alone, he would have communicated them, but they were not.

Whatever Whitman's duty in this matter, it behoves his biographer to present as full a picture as possible of his life, and to let no fact go by without notice; while the knowledge that Whitman himself could not disclose the whole truth, should only make us the more careful in our reading of the scanty facts which are known.

It seems that about this time Walt formed an intimate relationship with some woman of higher social rank than his own—a lady of the South where social rank is of the first consideration—that she became the mother of his child, perhaps, in after years, of his children; and that he was prevented by some obstacle, presumably of family prejudice, from marriage or the acknowledgment of his paternity.

The main facts can now hardly be disputed. Whitman put some of them on record in a letter to Addington Symonds during the last year of his life, designing to leave a fuller statement in the care of his executors. But this, through access of weakness, was never accomplished. Remarks which he let fall from time to time in private conversation seem to admit of no other interpretation than that I have put upon them.

In one of his poems [1] he vividly describes how once in a populous city he chanced to meet with a woman who cast her love upon him, and how they remained together till at last he tore himself away, to remember nothing of that city save her and her love. In spite of Whitman's express desire that the poem should be regarded merely in its universal application—a desire which in itself seems to betoken a consciousness of self-betrayal—we cannot but recognise its autobiographical suggestion. And in the stress laid upon the part of the woman, we

[1] *L. of G.*, 94.

may see a cause for Whitman's reticence. If it was she who had pressed the relationship, it behoved him the more, for her sake, to keep silence, and to leave the determination of the relationship to her.

But perhaps the most important evidence upon this obscure passage of his story is to be found in the psychological development which we can, as I believe, trace in his character. It was but a short time after his Southern visit,[1] perhaps in the same year, that he began to sketch out some of the poems which afterwards took the form familiar to us in *Leaves of Grass*. Now these differ from his earlier writings in many ways, but fundamentally in their subjectivity. In them he sets out to put himself on record in a way he heretofore had not attempted, and this enterprise must, I take it, have had its cause in some quickening of emotional self-consciousness. That process may well have culminated a few years later in what has been described as "cosmic consciousness"; but before that culmination, Whitman's experience must have contained elements which do not seem to have been present in the Whitman of *Franklin Evans*, or of the verses written upon the Mississippi. These elements, I believe, he acquired or began to acquire in the South.

Hitherto we have seen him as a young man of vigorous independence, eagerly observant of life, and delighting in his contact with it. Henceforward he enters into it in a new sense; some barrier has been broken down; he begins to identify himself with it. Strong before in his self-control, he is stronger still now that he has won the power of self-abandonment. Unconsciously he had always been holding himself back; at last he has let himself go. And to let oneself go is to discover oneself. Some men can never face that discovery; they are not ready for emancipation. Whitman was.

But who emancipated him? May we not suppose it was a passionate and noble woman who opened the

[1] *In re*, 116; *L. of G.*, 434; Bucke, 135; *cf. infra*, 89, 103.

gates for him and showed him himself in the divine mirror of her love? Had Whitman been an egoist such a vision would have enslaved and not liberated his soul.

But if this woman loved him to the uttermost, why did he leave her? Why did he allow the foulest of reproaches to blacken that whitest of all reputations, a Southern lady's virtue? Nowhere in the world could such a reproach have seemed more vile, more cruel. The only answer we can make is that it was, in some almost inexplicable way, her choice. And that somehow, perhaps by a fictitious marriage, this reproach was doubtless avoided; the woman's family being readier to invent some subterfuge than to take a Northern journalist and artisan into their sacred circle. There is a poem which remained till recently in manuscript—a poem[1] of bitter sarcasm and marked power of expression—in which Whitman holds an aristocrat up to scorn. He never printed it himself, and this fact adds to the possibility that it may gain some of its force from personal suffering.

Whether Whitman met his lady again we do not know. There is no record of a second visit to the South, though there is no evidence to disprove such a visit; rather indeed, to the contrary, for Whitman speaks in one of his letters[2] of "times South" as periods in which his life lay open to criticism; and refers, elsewhere,[3] to his having lived a good deal in the Southern States. As he was in no position to reply to criticism upon this matter, he was careful not to arouse it.

Whatever lay behind his departure, Whitman left New Orleans on the 25th of May, 1848,[4] ascending the Mississippi in a river steamer between the monotonous flat banks. Jeff picked up at once.[5] They spent a few hours in St. Louis where the westward flowing streams of northern and of southern pioneers met and mingled.[6] Changing boats, and passing the mouth of the great yellow

[1] Camden, iii., 261, 262.
[2] Letter to A. J. Symonds, see *infra*, Appendix B.
[3] *Comp. Prose*, 522. [4] Camden, xxxiv. [5] *Comp. Prose*, 441-43.
[6] *Cf.* Winston Churchill, *The Crisis*,

Missouri, they made their way up the Illinois river for some two hundred miles, arriving after forty-eight hours at La Salle, whence a canal boat carried them to Chicago. Through the rich agricultural lands of Illinois they passed at a speed not exceeding three miles an hour.

They spent a day in the still very young metropolis of the North-west, travelling thence by way of the Great Lakes to Buffalo. The voyage occupied five glorious summer days. Whitman went on shore at every stopping place intensely interested in everything. He was so delighted with the State of Wisconsin, which was about this time admitted to the Union, that he dreamed of settling in one of its new clean townships; and he carried away with him definite impressions of the towns of Milwaukee, Mackinaw, Detroit, Windsor, Cleveland, and Buffalo.

A week from La Salle he passed under the Falls of Niagara and saw the whirlpool; but coming at the end of so much wonder, the stupendous spectacle does not seem to have greatly impressed him. Twenty-four hours of continuous travel through the thickly settled country districts of New York State brought him to the old Dutch capital of Albany, whence descending the beautiful Hudson with its wooded high-walled mountain banks, he reached New York on the evening of 15th June.

He had been away from home four months, had travelled as many thousand miles, and had made acquaintance with seventeen of the States of the Union. In New Orleans he had learnt the meaning of the South, from St. Louis he had looked into the new West, while in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, and the coasts of Ontario, he had seen the rich corn-lands of the North-west under their first tillage. And he had felt the meaning of the Mississippi, that great river whose tributaries, from the Alleghanies to the Rockies, drain and fertilise half the arable land of America.

Besides the discovery in himself of a new world, a new hemisphere, Whitman came home filled with the sense of his American citizenship. A patriot from his childhood, from henceforward "these States," as he

loved to call them, became the object of his passionate devotion. Not in their individuality alone—though this he recognised more than ever, regarding each in some degree as a nation—but above all in their Union. Thus he came back to Brooklyn to take up his old vocation and his old acquaintances with a sense of enlargement: latent powers had been awakened within him and a new ideal which may once have been a childish dream, began to dominate his manhood, hitherto lacking in a clear purpose.

In the old days,[1] when his mother read the Bible to him and taught him something of its meaning, it had seemed to the child that the highest of all the achievements of manhood must be to make such another book as that. It had been written thousands of years ago by inspired men, to be completed some day by others as truly inspired as they. For he believed in the Quaker doctrine of the continuity of revelation, which is not strange to a child.

Such fancies in a child's mind are apt to grow into a purpose: to dream, is to dream of something one will presently do. If the dream is wholly beyond the range of possible accomplishment, a cloud of disillusionment descending on the face of youth will blot it out; but if it is not, it may become an ideal which will shape the whole of manhood as sternly as any fate.

To be an American prophet-poet, to make the American people a book which should be like the Bible in spiritual appeal and moral fervour, but a book of the New World and of the new spirit—such seems to have been the first and the last of Whitman's day-dreams. It must have come to him as a vague longing when he was still very young, and he was never so old as to lose it. Now on his return from this long journey, his mind full of America and full of profound and mystical thoughts concerning love and the soul and the soul's relation to the world, the dream began to struggle in him for utterance. It was seven years before it found itself a body of words, but henceforward it took possession of his life.

[1] *Cf. L. of G.*, 434.

CHAPTER V

ILLUMINATION

WHITMAN returned to Brooklyn about the time that Free-soil Democrats and Liberty men were uniting at Buffalo on the ticket and platform which I have already described. He established a small bookstore and printing office on Myrtle Avenue,[1] and commenced the publication of the *Freeman*, a weekly first, but afterwards a daily paper.

The venture continued for about a year but eventually proved unsuccessful. Its failure may have been due to the comparatively small circle of readers which the Free-soil party in Brooklyn could provide, or it may have resulted from the same lack of regularity which killed the *Long Islander*. It is not improbable that Whitman wearied of the continuous mechanical production demanded by the ownership and management of a daily paper. He was not methodical; and his mind was struggling with ideas which made him restless in harness, ideas so large and fundamental that much of the merely ephemeral detail of journalism must have become irritating and irksome. When the *Freeman* collapsed it was a bondage broken, and its owner and editor became a freeman himself.

His father was some sixty years of age and failing in health, and for lack of anything more suited to his state of mind, Walt joined him, taking up his business and becoming a master carpenter, building small frame-houses in Brooklyn and selling them upon completion as his father had been doing these thirty years.

[1] Bucke, 25.

Brooklyn was growing fast, and the Whitmans prospered. Walt lived at home and spent little; he was soon on the way to become rich. What was more important, he was now the master of his own time; and carpentering left his mind free to work entirely in its own way. He was no longer being "pushed for copy". When the mood was urgent he could idle; that is to say, he could give himself up to his thoughts. He could dream, but the saw in his hand and the crisp timber kept him close to reality. He was out of doors, too, and among things rather than thoughts, so that his ideas were but rarely bookish.

Yet though he was the opposite of bookish he was not ill-read. He always carried a volume or part of a magazine in his knapsack with his mid-day dinner;[1] and every week for years he had visited Coney Island beach to bathe there and to read. He watched the English and American reviews, bought second-hand copies whenever they contained matter of interest to him, tore out his prize and devoured it with his sandwich. He loved especially to read a book in its native elements: the *Inferno*[2] in an ancient wood, Homer in a hollow of the rocks with the Atlantic surf on either hand, while he saw all the stage-plays of Shakespeare upon the boards.

He had always remained faithful to Scott, and especially to the Border ballads of his collection, with their innumerable and repaying notes. He studied the Bible systematically and deliberately, weighing it well and measuring it by the standards of outdoor America in the nineteenth century. In the same way and spirit he had read and re-read Shakespeare's plays before seeing them, until he could recite extended passages; and he had come to very definite conclusions about their feudal and aristocratic atmosphere and influence.

He read Aeschylus and Sophocles in translations, and

[1] J. T. Trowbridge, *My Own Story*. *Cf.* list of articles, etc., in Camden, vol. x.

[2] Later than this, spring, 1859; *cf.* Camden, ix., 92.

felt himself nearer to the Greeks than to Shakespeare or the Middle Ages. It is interesting to note that he barely mentions Euripides, most modern of the Hellenes, the poet of women, and was evidently little acquainted with Plato. Surely if he had read *The Republic* or *The Symposium* there could be no uncertainty upon the matter.

But about another poet, as opposed to Plato as any in the category, there is no shade of doubt. Whitman, like Goethe and Napoleon, was a lover of that shadowy being whom Macpherson exploited with such success—Ossian the Celt.[1] Ossian is dead, and for good reason—we can do much better than read Ossian to-day; but with all his mouthings and in spite of the pother of his smoke, he is not without a flavour of those Irish epics which are among the perfect things of pure imagination. And when one thinks of the eighteenth century with its town wit, one cannot wonder at the welcome Macpherson's Ossian won. Great billowy sea-mists engulf its reader; and through them he perceives phantom-forms, which, though they are but the shadows of men, are pointed out to him for gods. But at least the sea is there, and the wind and an outdoor world. Whitman was not blind to the indefinite and misty in Ossian.[2] He himself clung to the concrete, and though he could rant he preferred upon the whole to use familiar phrases.[3] But he loved Ossian for better, for worse. And we may add as a corollary he disliked Milton.[3]

In the case of the foreign classics I have mentioned and of others like Don Quixote, Rousseau, and the stories of the Nibelungen,[4] he fell back upon translations, and in works of classical verse, often upon prose. He declaimed the *Iliad* in Pope's heroics, but he studied it according to Buckley.[5]

As a journalist and writer for the magazines, he had become more or less acquainted with contemporary literature, but, with few exceptions only, it seems to have

[1] Camden, ix., 188; *Comp. Prose*, 184, 185.
[2] Camden, ix., 95. [3] *Ib.*, 98. [4] *Ib.*, 80, 81. [5] *L. of G.*, 441.

ffected him negatively. He knew something of Wordsworth, Byron and Keats;[1] the first he said was too much of a recluse and too little of a lover of his kind; Byron was a pessimist, and in the last of the three he seemed only to find one of the over-sensitive products of civilisation and gentility. Tennyson—whose "Ulysses" (1842) was a special favourite—interested him from the beginning, though Whitman always resented what he called his "feudal" atmosphere.[2] It is doubtful whether he had yet read anything of Carlyle's, though he would be acquainted with the ideas of *Heroes and Hero-Worship*.

Among Americans, he was apparently most familiar with Bryant and with Fenimore Cooper. When he first studied Emerson is uncertain; he seems to have known him as a lecturer, and could not have been ignorant of the general tendencies of his teaching.[3] Longfellow's "Evangeline," Lowell's "Biglow Papers" and Whittier's "Voices of Freedom" were the talk of the time. He had met Poe; and his tragic death at Baltimore in 1849 may have set him to re-read the brilliant but disappointing verses, and profounder criticism, of that ill-starred genius.[4]

But it was from the pages of the Bible, of Homer and of Shakespeare, of Ossian and of Scott that he derived most. Ballads he loved when they came from the folk; but Blake and Shelley, the purely lyrical writers of the new era, do not seem to have touched him; perhaps they were hardly virile enough, for when he came to know and appreciate Burns, it was as a lyrist who was at once the poet of the people and a full-blooded man. From all of which it may be deduced that it was the elemental and the virile, rather than the subtle qualities of imagination which appealed to him; he responded to breadth and strength of movement and of passion, rather than to any kind of formal or static beauty. For him, poetry was a passionate movement, the rhythm of progress, the march of humanity, the procession of

[1] Camden, ix., 98, 120. [2] *Ib.*, 123-128; *Comp. Prose*, 487.
[3] Camden, ix., 160; *cf.* Trowbridge. [4] *L. of G.*, 441.

Freedom. It was more; it was an abandonment to world-emotions. Where he felt this abandonment to inspiration, he recognised poetry, and only there. In American literature he did not feel it at all.

When he read poetry, the sea was his favourite companion. The rhythm of the waves satisfied the rhythmical needs of his mind. Everything that belonged to the sea exercised a spell over him. The first vision that made him desire the gift of words was that of a full-rigged ship;[1] and the love of ships and shipping remained a passion with him to the end; so that when he sought to describe his own very soul it was as a ship he figured it. For the embrace of the sea itself, for the swimmer's joy,[2] he had the lover's passion of a Swinburne or a Meredith.

His reading was not, of course, confined to pure literature, but we have no list of the books which he read in other departments. We know that he was deeply interested in the problems of philosophy and the discoveries of science.

Though never what is called a serious student of their works, he had a good understanding of the attitude both of the metaphysicians and of the physicists of his time; and he had no quarrel with either. In his simple and direct way he came indeed very near to them both; for he loved and reverenced concrete fact as he reverenced the concept of the cosmos. Individual facts were significant to him because they were all details of a Whole, but he loved facts too for their own sake. And to the Whole, the cosmos, his soul responded as ardently as to the detailed parts. The deeper his knowledge of detail—the closer his grasp upon facts—the more intense must be his consciousness of the Whole. This consciousness of the Whole illuminated him more fully about this date, in a way I will soon recount; it must for some time previously have been exercising an influence upon his thought.

Regarding poetry as the rhythmical utterance of emo

[1] Kennedy, 43. [2] *Fortnightly Review*, vi., 538.

ons which are produced in the soul by its relation to ne world, he doubtless regarded science as the means v which that world becomes concrete, diverse and real the soul, as it becomes one and comprehensible to through philosophy. Science and philosophy seemed ike essential, not hostile, to poetry. Poetry is the tterance of an inspired emotion; but an emotion in- ired by what? By the discovery that the Other and ne Self are so akin that joy and passion arise from eir contact.

In order to conceive of science or philosophy as hos- le to poetry, we must think of them as building up me barrier between us and the world. But in this spect modern science does not threaten poetry, for it cognises the homogeneity of a material self with a ma- rial world; neither does idealism threaten the source this emotion, regarding the self and the world as oth essentially ideal.

The aim of modern thought has been, not to isolate ne soul, but rather to give it back to the world of rela- ons. It seems to me that, in so far as Religion has ttempted to separate between the Self and things, be- ween God and Man, between the soul and the flesh, eligion has cut at the roots of poetry; but the Religion hich attempted this is not, I believe, the religion of ne modern world.

Whitman then accepted modern science and philo- phy with equanimity, in so far as he understood em, and in their own spheres. Apparent antagonisms etween them did not trouble him. They were for him ifferent functions of the one soul. He was too sensible f his own identity and unity in himself to share in the erplexity of those who lose this sense through the xclusive exercise of one or other of their functions. Iis joint exercise of these proved them to be harmonious. Ie was unconscious of any quarrel in himself between he scientific and the poetic, the religious and the philo- ophic faculties.

Definitions in such large matters must generally seem bsurd and almost useless, yet here they may be sug-

gestive. If Whitman had formulated his thought he might, perhaps, have said: "Science is the Self probing into the details of the Not-self; Philosophy is the Self describing the Not-self as a Whole; Religion is the attitude of the Self toward the Not-self; and Poetry springs from the passionate realisation of the homogeneity of the Self with the Not-self".

In such rough and confessedly crude definitions we may suggest, at anyrate, a theory for his attitude toward the thought of his day. That thought, it seems unnecessary to add, was impregnated by the positive spirit of science. Names like those of Leibnitz, Lamarck, Goethe, Hegel and Comte remind us that the idea of evolution was becoming more and more suggestive in every field—soon to be enforced anew, and more definitely, by Darwin, Wallace and Spencer. The idea of an indwelling and unfolding principle or energy is the special characteristic of nineteenth century thought, and it has been accompanied by a new reverence for all that participates in the process of becoming. Every form of life has its secret, and is worthy of study, for that secret is a part of the World's Secret, the Eternal Purpose which affects every soul. We are each a part of that progressive purpose which we call the universe. But we are each absolutely and utterly distinct and individual. Every one has his own secret, his own purpose; in the old phrase, it is to his own master that each one standeth or falleth.

Ideas such as these, the affirmations of a new age, were driving the remnants of the old faiths and the dogmas of the school of Paley into the limbo of the incredible; but they were also casting out the futile atheisms and scepticisms of the dead century. The era of Mazzini, Browning, Ruskin, Emerson, was an era of affirmations, not an era of doubt. And Whitman caught the spirit of his age: eagerly he accepted and assimilated it.

His knowledge of modern thought came to him chiefly through the more popular channels of periodical literature, and through conversations with thoughtful

men. Probably the largest and most important part of his reading, then and always, was the daily press. A journalist himself, he had besides an insatiable craving for living facts, and especially for American facts. He wanted to know everything about his country. America was his passion: he understood America. Sometimes he wondered if he was alone in that.

The papers were, indeed, crowded with news of enterprise and adventure. In California, the new territory which Frémont and Stockton had taken from Mexico, gold was discovered in 1848, and in eighteen months a torrent of 50,000 argonauts had poured across the isthmus and over the plains, leaving their trail of dead through the awful grey solitude of the waterless desert. In the summer of '49 there were five hundred vessels lying in San Francisco harbour,[1] where a few years earlier a single visitor had been comparatively rare. And at the same hour, on the eastern coast, every port was a-clamour with men frantically demanding a passage, and the refrain of the pilgrims' song was everywhere heard,

Oh, California, that's the land for me.

There is no indication in Whitman's writings that he was ever swept off his feet by this fierce tide of adventure. Anyone who has felt such a current setting in among the fluid populations of the West is not likely to underestimate its power. Even in the more staid and sober East the excitement must have been intense: and it is, at the first thought, surprising that Walt, who was still full of youth and strength and ambition, should have remained at home. On second thought, however, it is clear that gold-seeking was about the last enterprise to entice a man who was shortly to relinquish house-building because he was accumulating money.

The attraction of the new lands may have been strong when the *Freeman* released him, but he had had wander-

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 400, 401; C. H. Shinn, *Mining Camps* (1885), 132, 133.

ing enough for the present, and the attraction of New York itself was at least as strong. Unlike Joaquin Miller, who was among the first in each of the new mining camps which sprang up along the Pacific slopes during the next fifty years, Whitman remained within the circle of New York Bay. He was content to see the vessels being built for their long and hazardous voyage, strong to take all the buffeting of two oceans—those beautiful Yankee clipper ships which have never been rivalled for grace combined with speed. He was content to see all the possibilities of that bold frontier life in the friendly faces of young men leaning over the bench or driving their jolly teams.

He was not one of those who need to go afield in order that their sluggish blood may be quickened into daring, or their dull mood be thrilled with admiring wonder. Nothing was commonplace to his eyes, and he found adventures enough to occupy him in any street. Thus while others were framing new governments for new communities, he stayed at home and framed new houses for new families of workmen; and perhaps after all, in his transcendental fashion, he found his own work the more romantic. He had a deeply rooted prejudice against the exceptional; he planned for himself the life of an average American of the middle nineteenth century, no longer geographically a frontiersman, though more than ever a pioneer in other fields. He would have taken his pan and washed for gold in the Sacramento had he wanted; but the Brooklyn streets and ferry, Broadway and the faces of New York held him. He had not exhausted them yet.

He had, moreover, a strongly conservative instinct, an inclination to "stay put," evident in his story from this time forth. He was not a nomad, forever striking his tent and moving on; he wanted a settled home, and attached himself more than most men to the familiar. He took root, like a tree. The secure immobility of his base allowed him to stretch his branches far in every direction.

His mind, too, we may be sure, was occupied with its own problems. At first, perhaps, as an inner struggle with insurgent and rebel thoughts and desires, but now as an effort of the conscious self to include and harmonise new elements, and so to lie open to all experience with equanimity, refusing none. Such a process of integration in a mind like Whitman's requires years of slow growth and brooding consciousness, if it is to be fully and finally achieved. And as the integration of his character became more and more complete, he won another point of view upon all things, and, as it were, saw all things new. It is little wonder that we have but scanty record of the years from 1850 to 1855.

In his home-life in Brooklyn he was happy and beloved and able to follow his own path without being questioned, or, for that matter, understood. He was probably not quite the easiest of men to live with.[1] He had his own notions, with which others were not allowed to interfere; he never took advice, and was not too considerate of domestic arrangements.

As to money, which was never too plentiful in the household, he professed and felt a royal indifference, in which, one may suspect, the others did not share. The father was somewhat penurious on occasion and capable of sharp practice; he had worked hard and incessantly, and had known poverty; the youngest son, moreover, would always be dependent upon others, and Jesse, the oldest, seems to have displayed little ability. One can understand that the father and his second son —who, with the largest share of capacity, must have seemed to the old man the most given over to profitless whims and to idle pleasures—had not always found it easy to live together, and that in the past the mother, with her good sense and understanding of them both, had often had to mediate between them. In the later years, however, Walt understood his father thoroughly and himself better, so that their relationship became as happy as it was really affectionate.

[1] *In re*, 33-40.

His knowledge of the world, his coolness in a crisis, his deliberate balancing of the facts, and yet more deliberate and confident pronouncing of judgment, made him an oracle to be consulted by his family and the neighbours on every occasion of difficulty. The sisters and younger brothers were all fond of him; he was more than good-natured and kind, and never presumed upon his older years to limit their freedom of action or thought.

The man's kindliness and benignity are admirably suggested in the portraits taken in his thirty-sixth year, the earliest that we have. One in particular—that chosen for the frontispiece of this book—is almost articulate with candour and goodwill. In many respects it is the most interesting of the hundred or more portraits extant. Whitman was an excellent sitter, especially to the camera. His photographs give you a glance of recognition, and rarely wear the abstracted look, the stolidity, which is noticeable in several easel pictures.

The daguerrotype of 1854 is the most speaking of the whole series. It is an absolutely frank face, by no means the mask which, according to the sitter himself, one of the later portraits shows. It is frank, and it is kindly, but how much more! The longer one gazes at it the more complex its suggestions become. The eyes are not only kind, they are the eyes of a mystic, a seer; they are a thought wistful, but they are very clear. Like William Blake's, they are eyes that are good for the two visions; they see and they are seen through. If, as I suppose is probable, something of the expression is due to the fact that the photograph was taken on a brilliant summer's day, we can only congratulate ourselves that the elements co-operated with the sitter's soul.

In striking contrast with the eyes is the good-natured but loose mouth, a faun-like expression upon its thick lips, which dismisses at once any fancy of the ascetic saint. The nose, too, is thick, strong and straight, with large nostrils. Even in the photograph you can feel that

rich and open texture of the skin which radiates the joy of living from every pore.

It is the face, above all, of a man, and the face of a man you would choose for a comrade; there would be no fear of his failing or misunderstanding you. But, withal, it is the face of a spirit wholly untamed, a wood-creature if you will, perhaps the face of Adam himself, looking out upon Eden with divine eyes of immortality.

Remember, as you meet his gaze, that he knows the life of cities, and that the Fall lies behind him, not before. Perhaps that is why some who have looked at it describe it as the "Christ portrait"—for Jesus was the second Adam—but this is not the ascetic Christ of the Churches, the smile about the lips is too full for that. No, it is the face of a man responsive to all the appeals of the senses, a man who drives the full team of those wild horses of passion which tear in pieces less harmonious souls.

This is a man who saw life whole, and had joy of it. He knew the life of the body on every side, save that of sickness, and of the mind on every side, save that of fear. His large, friendly, attractive personality was always feeding him with the materials of experience, and there was nothing in it all which he did not relish. The responses of his nature to each object and incident were joyous; for the responses of a harmonious nature are musical, whatever be the touch that rouses them.

A shrewd estimate of Whitman's character had been made five years before by a New York phrenologist, and its general accuracy seems to have vanquished the incredulity of its subject.[1] Mr. Fowler described him—I will translate the jargon of his pseudo-science into plain English—as capable of deep friendship and sympathy, with tendencies to stubbornness and self-esteem, and a strong feeling for the sublime. He thought that Whitman's danger lay in the direction of indolence and

[1] *In re*, 25 n.

sensuality, "and a certain reckless swing of animal will". At the same time he recognised in him the quality of caution largely developed.

As this estimate was subsequently quoted by Whitman with approval, and referred to as an authority, it evidently tallied with his reading of himself, and while it is by no means remarkable or particularly significant, it bears out other testimony. That "reckless swing of animal will" always distinguished him from the colourless peripatetic brains and cold-blooded collectors of copy so numerous in the hosts of journalism. Walt came of a race of slow but passionate men, and when he was deeply moved he could be terrible. At such times his wrath blazed up and overwhelmed him in its sudden access, but it was as short-lived as it was swift.

It is related[1] that once in a Brooklyn church he failed to remove his soft broad-brimmed hat, and entered the building with his head thus covered, looking for all the world like some Quaker of the olden time. The offending article was roughly knocked off by the verger. Walt picked it up, twisted it into a sort of scourge, seized the astonished official by the collar—he always detested officials—trounced him with it, clapped it on his head again, and so, abruptly and coolly, left the church. He was a tall, muscular fellow, stood six feet two, and was broad in proportion, and could deal effectually with an offensive person when he felt that action was called for. Such actions naturally added to his popularity among the "boys"—the stage-drivers, firemen and others—with whom he was always a favourite. But, as a rule, he had no occasion to use his strength in this manner. He never gave, and rarely recognised, provocation. There are times, however, when persuasion has to give place to more summary demonstrations of purpose.

Of his strength, but especially of his health, he was not a little proud. As a lad, the praise that delighted him most was that of his well-developed body as he bathed.[2] He did not care to be thought handsome; he

[1] Johnston, 102. [2] G. Gilchrist, *op. cit.*

knew that wholesomeness and health were really more attractive, and he was content with his own perfect soundness. He was never ailing, even when, in his 'teens, he outgrew for a time his natural vigour. In middle life it was his boast that he could not remember what it was to be sick. Vanity is so natural in the young that when properly based it is probably a virtue, and there can be no question that Walt's was well-founded.

There is something more, however, in the portrait I have been describing than the perfection of physical health. It is health raised to its highest possibility, which radiates outward from the innermost seat of life, potent with the magnetism of personality, through every pore and particle of flesh. His health, hitherto unbroken, had been deepened into that sense of spiritual well-being which, in its fulness, only accompanies the realisation of harmony or wholeness.[1] He had undergone some fusing process which ended in unity and illumination.

It is difficult to say anything at all adequate about such an experience, because it appears to belong to the highest of the stages of consciousness which the race has yet attained; and because there are many men and women of the finest intellectual training and the widest culture to whom it remains foreign.

The petals of consciousness unfold as it were from within, and every stage of unfolding, being symmetrical, appears to be perfect. A further evolution is almost inconceivable, but the flower still unfolds. The healthy and vigorous personality of the man whose story we are trying to read, continued its development a stage further than the general, and at an age of from thirty to thirty-five established an exceptional relation with the universe.

That exceptional relation is best described as mystical, though the word has unhappy and unwholesome associations, which cannot attach to the character revealed in the portrait. Whitman was almost aggressively cheerful and rudely healthy. But he was not the less a mystic.

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 502.

One of the most essentially religious of men, his religion was based upon profound personal experience.

The character of mystical experience seems to vary as widely as does that of individual mystics, but it has certain common features. It is essentially an irruption of some profounder self into the field of consciousness; an irruption which is accompanied by a mysterious but most authoritative sense of the fulness, power and permanence of this new life. Consequent upon this life-enhancement, come joy and ecstasy.

The whole story of the development of consciousness is, as I have said, a process of unfoldings; but there is one critical moment of that process which occurs sometimes after the attainment of maturity, of such infinite significance to the individual that it seems like a revolution rather than a mere development in consciousness. It is often described as conversion. Whitman's experience was fully as significant and wonder-compelling as any; but momentous as it was, its nature compelled him to regard it as a further and crowning step in a long succession of stairs—a culmination, not a change of direction. With it he came to the top of the slope and looked over, on to the summit, and beheld the outstretched world. It was no turning round and going the other way; it was the rewarding achievement of a long and patient climb.

But the simile of the mountain-side hardly suffices, for this was a bursting of constraint—a breaking, as well as a surmounting of barriers; as though the accumulating waters in some dark and hidden reservoir should so increase in volume that they burst at last through their confining walls of rubble and of rock, forcing their way upwards in a rush of ecstasy to the universal life and the outer sunshine. This outlet of the pent-up floods of emotional experience into another and a vaster sphere of consciousness — this outpouring of the soul from its confinement in the darkness to the freedom of the light—results from the slow accumulation of the stores of life, but it has at last its supreme hour, its divine instant of liberation.

In this it has its parallel with the passion of Love. For the inner mysteries of religion and of sex are hardly to be separated. They are different phases of the one supreme passion of immanent, expanding and uniting life; mysterious breakings of barriers, and burstings forth; expressions of a power which seems to augment continually with the store of the soul's experience in this world of sense; experience received and hidden beneath the ground of our consciousness. To feel the passion of Love is to discover something of that mystery breaking, in its orgasm, through the narrow completeness and separate finality of that complacent commonplace, which in our ignorance we build so confidently over it, and creating a new life of communion. To feel the passion of religion is to discover more.

The relation of the two passions was so evident to Whitman that we may believe it was suggested to his mind by his own experience. In some lives it would appear that the one passion takes the place of the other, so that the ascetics imagine them to be mutually exclusive; but this was certainly not Whitman's case. Whitman's mysticism was well-rooted in the life of the senses, and hence its indubitable reality. We have seen that he had had experience of sex-love, and we have found reasons to aver that it was of a noble and honourable order; we have seen this experience followed by an acute crisis and its determination, or at least its suspension, and change of character.

But in the meantime, the sex-experience had revealed to Whitman the dominance in his nature of those profound emotional depths of which he had always been dimly conscious since the hours on Long Island beach. The whole crisis had made him realise more fully than ever the solemnity and mysterious purpose of life. It had not satisfied him: it had roused in him many perplexities, and had entailed what was probably the first great sacrifice of his life. In a word, this obscure and mysterious page in his story prepared him who read it for a further emotional revelation, such as I have been describing.

This actually came to him one memorable midsummer morning[1] as he lay in the fields breathing the lucid air. For suddenly the meaning of his life and of his world shone clear within him, and arising, spread an ineffable peace, joy and knowledge all about him. The long process of integration was at last completed. He was at one with himself, and at peace. It was the new birth of his soul, and properly speaking, the commencement of his manhood.

Co-incident with self-realisation came the realisation of the universe. He saw and felt that it was all of the same divine stuff as the new-born soul within him; that love ran through it purposefully from end to end; that thought could not fathom the suggestions which the least of things was capable of making to its brother the soul; that the very leaves of the grass were inspired with divine spirit as truly as the leaves of any Bible. It was as though something far larger than that which he had hitherto regarded as himself had now become self-conscious in him. He was an enthusiast in the literal sense of that mystic word, possessed by a god, filled with the divine consciousness. The Spirit is One, and he was in the Spirit. It identified him with the things and objects that hitherto had appeared external to him, and infinitely increased his sense of their mysterious beauty. George Fox's description of his own mystical experience is true, upon the whole, of Whitman's. He writes: "Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the Paradise of God. All things were new,

[1] *In re*, 342; Camden, iii., 276, 277, 287; Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*, 33-35; *L. of G.*, 32, 33. *Cf.*:—

. . . "Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the Earth.
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the Spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and poke weed."—*L. of G.*, ed. '92.

nd all the creation gave another smell unto me than efore, beyond what words can utter."[1] When one con- ders the Quaker reputation for veracity and caution, ne can hardly doubt that these wonderful words de- ribe a condition of consciousness similar to that of Whitman on the June morning of which we speak.

Fox continues that the nature of things lay so open to im that he was at a stand "whether he should practise hysic for the good of mankind". It was by the subtle mpathy of the Spirit that the first Quaker supposed mself to be familiar with the medicinal virtues of erbs, and the same sympathy made Whitman feel that e understood the purpose of their myriad lives. The onder of the universal life was revealed to them both. hey partook of the consciousness which pervades all natter.

To both men illumination brought a double gift of sion, vision into the nature of the universal purpose— the spiritual or deeper side of life—and insight into ne condition and needs of individuals. But in Fox nd Whitman this insight, which seems to predominate ather in observant than in creative types of genius such s theirs, was less prominent than the other vision. They ere more largely occupied with the universal than with ne individual; and while their words carry the extraor- narily intimate message of an appeal to the profoundest ement in each soul, their very universality may have ndered them often indifferent to the secondary con- iousness or individual self of their hearers. And it is bservable that neither of them evinced anything of that amatic gift which seems to require the predominance this insight into the secondary self-consciousness. he impersonality with which as preacher or poet they ade their public appeal, must have made them at times omewhat inaccessible in their private lives.

Consciousness, it would seem, is of a double nature, eing, as it were, both personal and impersonal—if we ay use these terms of something that seems after all

[1] *Fox's Journal* (ed. 1901), p. 28.

to be so wholly personal. And hence it appears contradictory to itself, and we are forever trying to harmonise it by the sacrifice of one portion to the other. But in reality it is one consciousness with two functions: the first for fellowship and communion, the second for definition and for concrete achievement.

Whitman developed these two functions harmoniously; he never sacrificed his individual self-consciousness to the cosmic. He was just as positively Walt Whitman the man, as he was Walt Whitman the organ of inspiration. I think we may say that in the midst of that mysterious wonder, that extension of himself which took place at the touch of God, Whitman's own identity, so far from being lost, was deepened and intensified, so that he knew instinctively and beyond a doubt that it was in some sense of the word absolute and imperishable.

Earlier in this chapter we viewed philosophy as the attempt of the Self to apprehend the Not-self as a Whole; Whitman's revelation was, it seems to me, the discovery in himself of the sense which does so apprehend the universe; not as a hypothetical Whole, but as an incarnate purpose, a life with which he was able to hold some kind of communion. It was a realisation, not a theory. Whatever this communion may have been, it related him to the universe on its spiritual side by a bond of actual experience. It related him to the ants and the weeds, and it related him more closely still to all men and women the world over. The warmth of family affection was extended to all things, as it had been in the experience of the Nazarene, and of the little poor man of Assisi.

But while his sense of relationship to individuals was thus quickened, the quickening power lay in the realisation of God's life, and of his own share in it. His realisation of God had come to him through an ardent love of individual and concrete things; but now it was that realisation which so wonderfully deepened and impassioned his relation to individuals. What we mean

when we use the word God in public, is necessarily somewhat ambiguous and obscure; but when Whitman used it, as he did but rarely and always with deliberation, he seems to have meant the immanent, conscious Spirit of the Whole.

Theory came second to experience with him, and he was no adept at definition: the interest he grew to feel in the Hegelian philosophy and in metaphysics resulted from his longing, not to convince himself, but to explain himself intelligibly to his fellows, and, in so far as it was possible, make plainer to them the meaning of the world and of themselves.

It seems desirable to define his position a little further, though we find ourselves at once in a dilemma; for at this point it is evident that he was both—or neither—a Christian nor a Pagan. He is difficult to place, as indeed we must often feel our own selves to be, for whom the idea of a suffering God is no more completely satisfying than that of Unconscious Impersonal Cosmic Force. Again, while worship was a purely personal matter for him, yet the need of fellowship was so profound that he strove to create something that may not improperly be described as a Church, a world-wide fellowship of comrades, through whose devotion the salvation of the world should be accomplished.

In a profound sense, though emphatically not that of the creeds, Whitman was Christian, because he believed that the supreme Revelation of God is to be sought, not in the external world, but in the soul of man; because he held, though not in the orthodox form, the doctrine of Incarnation; because he saw in Love, the Divine Law and the Divine Liberty; and because it was his passionate desire to give his life to the world. In all these things he was Christian, though we can hardly call him "a Christian," for in respect of all of these he might also be claimed by other world-religions.

As to the Churches, he was not only outside them, but he frankly disliked them all, with the exception of the Society of Friends; and even this he probably looked

upon principally as a memory of his childhood, a tradition which conventionality and the action of schismatics had gone far to render inoperative in his Nineteenth Century America. We may say that he was Unitarian in his view of Jesus; but we must add that he regarded humanity as being fully as Divine as the orthodox consider Jesus to be; while his full-blooded religion was very far from the Unitarianism with which he was acquainted;[1] and his faith in humanity exalted the passions to a place from which this least emotional of religious bodies is usually the first to exclude them. In fact, he took neither an intellectual nor an ascetic view of religion. He had the supreme sanity of holiness in its best and most wholesome sense; but whenever it seemed to be applied to him in later years he properly disclaimed the cognomen of saint, less from humility, though he also was humble, than because he knew it to be inapplicable. In conventional humility and the other negative virtues, renunciation, remorse and self-denial, he saw more evil than good. His message was one rather of self-assertion, than of self-surrender. One regretfully recognises that, for many critics, this alone will be sufficient to place him outside the pale.

Another test would be applied by some, and though it would exclude many besides Whitman, we may refer to it in passing. He was apparently without the sense of mystical relationship, save that of sympathy, with Jesus as a present Saviour-God.[2] But none the less he had communion with the Deity whose self-revealing nature is not merely Energy but Purpose. And his God was a God not only of perfect and ineffable purpose, but of all-permeating Love.[3]

Whether his relation to God can be described as prayer, it is perhaps unprofitable to ask. It is better worth while to question whether he was conscious of feeding upon "the bread of life," for this consciousness is a test of communion. Undoubtedly he was; and the

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 322; Camden, v., 280, 281.
[2] *Cf.* however, *infra*, 167.
[3] *Cf. In re*, 358; Camden, ix., 166 (on Hegel).

ourishment which fed his being came to him as it ere through all media. The sacrament of wafer and up is the symbol of that Immanent Real Presence which also recognised in the grace before meat. Whitman artook of the sacrament continually, converting all ensation into spiritual substance.

The final test of religions, however, is to be found in eir fruits, and the boast of Christianity is its "passion r souls". Now Whitman is among the great examples this passion, and his book is one long "personal ppeal" addressed, sometimes almost painfully, "to ou".

But, it may be asked, did he aim at "saving souls r Christ"? If I understand this very mystical and bscure question, and its ordinary use, I must answer, o,—but I am not sure of its meaning. Whitman's wn salvation urged him to save men and women by ie Love of God for the glory of manhood and of omanhood and for the service of humanity.

Far as this may be from an affirmative reply to the uestion, the seer who has glimpses of ultimate things ill yet recognise Whitman as an evangelical. For he rought good tidings in his very face. He preached ourself, as God purposed you, and will help and have ou to be. Whether this is Paganism or Christianity t us leave the others to decide; sure for ourselves, at ast, that it is no cold code of ethical precepts and im- ersonal injunctions, but the utterance of a personality come radiant, impassioned and procreative by the otency of the divine spirit within.

In stating thus the nature of Whitman's vision, I do ot wish to place it too far out of the field of our common xperience. His ordinary consciousness had been touched y it in earlier hours; and some gleam or glimmer of it nters every life as an element of romance. But for ost of us, only as a light on the waters that passes and gone, not as in Whitman's case, and in the case of any another mystic whether Pagan or Christian—for ysticism is far older and more original than the creeds

—as the inward shining and immortal light which henceforward becomes for them synonymous with health and wholeness. For most men, the fairy light of childhood becomes a half-forgotten, wholly foolish memory; Romance also we outgrow, or cling only to its dead corpse as to a pretty sentiment. Thus the wonder of our childhood and our youth, so essentially real in itself, fades into the light of common day; it becomes for our unbelief a light that never was on sea or land.

But in Whitman's story we find it living on, to become transformed in manhood into the soul of all reality. His wonder at the world grew more. And this wonder, always bringing with it, to the man as to the child, a sense of exhilaration and expansion, was at the heart of his religion, as it is doubtless at the heart of all. No one will ever understand Whitman or his influence upon those who come in contact with him, who does not grasp this fact of his unflagging and delighted wonder at life. It kept him young to the end. The high-arched brows over his eyes are its witness.

CHAPTER VI

THE CARPENTER

N the fifties a change came over America, a change preluding the great struggle which ensued. The pulation grew rapidly with its former mathematical gularity; but the settlement and development of the untry went forward even more rapidly. During the cade, the area of improved land increased by one-half, d the value of farm property was doubled. The west nk of the Mississippi being already settled, the future the lands still further west between the Missouri and e Rockies, became of paramount interest to the nation. was this problem of the West which strained until it oke that policy of compromise which for a generation d bound American politics.

The year 1850 itself is memorable for Clay's opportunist resolutions in Congress, which were intended to ttle nothing; and for the fierce debates upon them d upon the Fugitive Slave Bill, in which Webster d Seward, Calhoun and Jefferson Davis participated.[1] ay and Webster died soon after, and their party being terly routed at the polls in 1852, finally went to pieces. ne vote of the liberty party had declined, and compromise still held up its foolish head. But the victorious emocrats brought all hope of its continuance to an end reviving the principle of "squatter sovereignty," and oceeding to apply it in the newly settled lands. It s their policy to snatch the question of slavery out of e hands of Congress; for which, as the organ of the

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 417, 418.

Federal power, they nursed an increasing enmity. The bloody scenes which drew all eyes to Kansas made it plain that compromise was done; the South had thrown it over, and was now half-consciously driving the country into war.

When the leaders of 1850 died there was no one to take their places, though the crisis called for men of counsel and of spirit. President Pierce, of New Hampshire, the tool of the party machine, merely represented the political weakness of the nation. It was not till after the next elections that their new leaders were discovered by the American people. Judge Douglas, the champion of "squatter sovereignty," rose indeed into prominence in 1854, but his greater antagonist still remained comparatively unknown in the country, though famous in his State and among his neighbours for keen logic and humorous common-sense.

There was no leadership. Compromise was yielding not to principle but to the spirit of the mob. Immigration and the increase of the towns favoured organised political corruption; and the tyranny of interests and privileges was beginning to make itself felt on every hand. When parties are separated by motives of personal gain rather than by principle, party-feeling finds expression not in devotion and enthusiasm, but in violence. It was not only in such newly settled lands as Kansas, nor alone in such chaotic aggregations of humanity as were being piled together in New York, that constitutional methods were abandoned and private violence was condoned. The spirit of anarchy was abroad, and members of Congress went armed to the Capitol itself.

The violence was a natural reaction from the compromise, and like the compromise was a birth of the materialistic spirit. America's idealism, so triumphant at the close of the eighteenth century, had fallen upon too confident a slumber, and heavily must the Republic pay for that sleep. A young nation of idealists is doubtless more subject than any other to these outbreaks of materialism and its offspring. It is optimistic, and

when it sleeps it leaves no dogs on guard. The nation becomes engrossed in material tasks, and is presently surprised by the enemy. But being so surprised, and fighting thus at disadvantage, it accomplishes more than the wary old pessimists whose energy is absorbed in prudence.

American idealism was asleep, but its slumbers were by no means sound. The voices of Garrison, Emerson and others mingled troublously with its dreams. And the pursuit and capture of fugitive slaves like Anthony Burns, in Boston itself; and the extraordinary sale, both in America and Europe, of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,[1] did much to quicken that Abolitionist sentiment which in the end won the day. For the present, however, and until the third year of the war, abolition remained outside the region of practical politics. The question which was dividing the nation was whether slavery should become a national institution—whether it should take its place, as the South intended, as one of the essential postulates in the theory of American liberty—or should be restrained within its old limits as a State institution, an evil which the Federal Government would never recognise as necessary to the welfare of America, but which it was too proud and too generous to compel its constituent States to abolish. The situation was one of unstable equilibrium, and the illogical position could not much longer be maintained. It was the logic of ideas that first drove the South into secession, and afterwards the nation into abolition.

Immigration was now beginning to create a difficult problem in the metropolis,[2] and was in part accountable for the corruption which from this time forward disfigured its politics. By 1855 New York counted more than six hundred thousand inhabitants; a number which in itself must inevitably have created many a delicate situation in a new country, but which was rendered tenfold more difficult to manage by its rapid growth and

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 440. [2] *Ib.*, 701.

heterogeneous character. It had doubled in fifteen years, and a continuously increasing stream of immigration had poured through it.

The first great wave had brought nearly two millions of Europeans, principally Germans and Irish, across the Atlantic during the later forties. The failure of the Irish potato crop in 1846, the crisis of 1848, when Europe was swept by revolution and afterwards by reaction, sent hundreds of thousands of homeless men across the sea. Many of the Germans afterwards took their share in another struggle for freedom in their new home; but on the other hand, the more helpless of the immigrants, and a large proportion of the Irish, swelled the population of New York; and proved themselves quicker to learn the advantages of party subserviency than the ethics of citizenship. Many of them had been trained in the school of tyranny at home. Thus the city government became almost hopelessly corrupt, falling into the hands of the genteel and unprincipled Mayor Fernando Wood,[1] and Isaiah Rynders, captain of his bodyguard of blackguards. Men of this stamp began to control not only the government of New York city, but the national party which had its headquarters at Tammany Hall. Whitman was intimate with the condition of things there,[2] and knew the men who manipulated the machine, and pulled the strings at the nominating conventions. He has described those of this period in the most scathing words, and has made it clear that they were among the worst of a bad class. They did not favour slavery so much as inaction; they longed only for a continuance of their own good fortune, desiring to fatten peacefully at the troughs of corruption. To men like these, ideals seem to constitute a public danger. And the war which broke over America in 1861 was due as much to the northern menials of Mammon as to the real followers of Calhoun. It was not only against the South that America fought—or rather it was not against the South itself at all—but against the hosts

[1] Roosevelt, 195. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 217.

of those who used her freedom for the accomplishment of an end antagonistic to hers.

Evidences of the demoralising influence always present in the life of a great city were thus painfully patent in New York, especially in the lowest strata, becoming hourly more debased and numerous. The plutocracy also began to imitate the showy splendours of Paris under the second Empire.[1] But it would be wrong to assume that corruption and display characterised the metropolis of the fifties. For in spite of the foreign influx, and the venality of a considerable class both of native and of foreign birth, and in spite too of the snobs, in spite that is to say of the appearance of two dangerous elements, the very poor and the very rich, there was still predominant in New York a frank and hearty democratic feeling. The mass of the people still embodied much of the true American genius; they were marked by the friendly, independent and unconventional carriage which is still upon the whole typical of the West.

New York was full of large democratic types of manhood. Notable, even among these, was Walt Whitman. Even here, he was unlike other men: the fulness of his spirits, his robust individuality, the generosity of his whole nature, was so exceptional as to make itself felt. His figure began to grow familiar to all kinds of New Yorkers during these years. He was frequently to be seen on Broadway,[2] in his favourite coign of vantage, on the stage-top by the driver's side, a great, red-faced fellow, in a soft beaver, with clothes of his own choosing, an open collar like that of Byron or Jean Paul, and a grey beard. The dress suited him, he was plainly at home in it, and in those days it was not specially remarkable or odd; it was the man himself who compelled attention.

On many a holiday through 1853 he might also have been seen at the International Exhibition or World's Fair,[3] which was held in the Crystal Palace on Sixth

[1] Roosevelt, 199. [2] Burroughs (*a*), 24, 25. [3] Bucke, 25.

Avenue and Fortieth Street, and offered a remarkable object lesson to the people of New York on the development of American resources and the value of that national unity which railroads and machinery were yearly making more actual. Here America was seen in all her own natural promise, and also in her relation to the Transatlantic world.

It was one of those sights which Whitman dearly loved. The Exhibition taught him far more than books about the country in which he lived; for his mind was like a child's in its responsiveness to concrete illustrations—a quality which may explain the long strings of nouns which figure so oddly on many a page which he afterwards wrote. He loved a medley of things, each one significant and delightful in itself. A catalogue was for him a sort of elemental poem; and being elemental, he sought to introduce the catalogue into literature. We who live in another and more ordered world, rarely respond to this kind of emotional stimulus, which was doubtless very powerful for Whitman, and cannot but laugh at his attempts to move us by a chatter of names. It may be we are wrong, and that another age will smile at us in our turn, though at present we remain incredulous.

Here, too, he studied such examples as he found of statuary and painting, arts of which he must hitherto have been largely ignorant. It is only very old or very wealthy cities that become treasuries of the plastic arts, and at this time New York was not yet sufficiently rich, or perhaps sufficiently travelled, to have accumulated this kind of wealth. Whitman was not blind to painting, like Carlyle, for in later years he so appreciated the genius of J. F. Millet that he used to say, "the man that knows his Millet needs no creed".[1]

After a varied experience as teacher, printer, journalist and editor, Whitman had settled into the life of an American artisan. He had inherited much of the Dutch realism,

[1] MSS. Traubel.

the love of things and of the making of things, from his mother's side; while on his father's, the associations with mallet and chisel had been strong from his childhood; and thus his trade helped him to gather together the fragments of his identity and weld them into one. As he was never in any sense its slave, it also provided him with the means for that constant leisurely study of life which was now his real occupation. When a house was off his hands and the money for it assured, he would take a holiday, extending sometimes over weeks together, in the remote parts of Long Island.[1] The open spaces helped his mood, and the quietness furthered the slow processes of self-realisation.

While at Brooklyn, he was every day on the ferry, and almost every evening he was in New York. He read during his dinner hour, and thought and meditated while he worked. The physical exercise quieted his brain. Taken earlier, it might have deadened it; but he was now a mature man full of thoughts, and well furnished with experience. What he needed was to assimilate all this material and make it his own. And while he built houses, the co-ordinating principle of his personality was building up for him a harmonious self-consciousness, which gradually filled out the large and wholesome body of the man. This gestating process required precisely the deliberation and open-air accompaniments which were afforded by his present life—a life so different from the confinement and incessant strain and stress which check all processes of conscious development in most men and women before they reach maturity. His nature was emotional, and music played a considerable part in its development. Always an assiduous opera-goer, Whitman took full advantage of the musical opportunities which New York offered him at this time. In 1850, Barnum had brought Jenny Lind to the Castle Gardens—now the Aquarium—a fashionable resort on the Battery, and Maretzek of the Astor Opera House, had replied with Parodi, and Bettini the great tenor.[2]

[1] Bucke, 24. [2] *Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, iv., 178.

Best of all, in 1853, Marietta Alboni visited the city, and Whitman heard her every night of her engagement.[1] This great singer, whose voice was then in the plenitude of its power, had been some twelve years before the public and was already beginning to attain those physical proportions suggested in the cruel but witty saying that she resembled an elephant which had swallowed a nightingale. She was low-browed and of a somewhat heavy face, though Whitman thought her handsome; but it was by her voice, not her face, that she triumphed. Critics found her talent exceptionally impersonal and even cold, though they confessed that never voice was more enchanting.[2] This coldness is rather difficult to understand, for Whitman, who was a judge in such matters, felt it to be full of passion, and a passion which swept him away in the Titanic whirlwind of its power.[3] He had found Jenny Lind somewhat immature and her voice unrewarding, but Alboni awakened and illumined his very soul, and became, as it were, the incarnation of music.

The same summer[4] Walt took his father, whose health was failing, on a visit to Huntington, to see the old home for a last time. Two years later, Walter Whitman died and was buried in Brooklyn.

The family seems to have been living in Ryerton Street,[5] in a house which was the last building on that side of the town. Beside Walt, there were three unmarried brothers at home, George and Jeff as well as Edward; and Hannah, Walt's favourite sister. We hear little of Jesse, the oldest brother, who appears to have been a labourer, of Andrew, or of the remaining sister Mary. Probably they were all married by this time and living away.

The three at home were the ablest of the brothers, and doubtless they shared the financial responsibility between them. The Portland Avenue house, into which they presently moved, bears witness to their comfort-

[1] *Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, iv., 179; *cf. Saturday Rev.*, 30th June, 1894.
[2] G. Bousquet, *Nouvelle Biog. Générale.* [3] MSS. Wallace.
[4] Bucke, 157. [5] M. D. Conway, *Autobiography*, vol. i.

able circumstances. Walt contributed his share with his brothers; beyond that he seemed indifferent about money; he hardly ever spoke of it, and perhaps by way of contrast with the others, evidently regarded the subject as of minor importance. Indeed, just as his own work had really grown profitable and he was on the way to become rich, he gave up carpentering for good. This was early in 1855.

Of late he had been more and more absorbed and pre-occupied; his days off had been more frequent and numerous, and whatever his immediate occupation he was continually stopping to write. He seemed to grow daily more indifferent to opinion, daily more markedly himself.

The fragments which he wrote in out-of-the-way places or at work he would read aloud or recite when by himself, to the waves or to the trees; trying them over at the opera, on the ferry, or on Broadway, where in the midst of the city one can be so unobserved and so unheard in the heart of its hubbub. He must assure himself that they were without a hint of unreality or of books.

For he was now deliberately at work upon his great task, his child's fancy. He was come up into his manhood. He had, it seemed to him, thoroughly perceived and absorbed the spirit of America and of his time. His message had come to him, and he was writing his prophetic book, his *Song of Walt Whitman*.

At last, the manuscript was done, and in the early summer he went to work in a little printing shop on Cranberry Street, and set up much, perhaps the whole, of the type jealously with his own hands.[1] About the beginning of July, and a few days only before his father's death, it was completed. In the *New York Tribune* for the sixth of the month, it was advertised as being on sale at Fowler & Wells's Phrenological Depôt and Bookstore on Broadway, and at Swayne's in Fulton Street, Brooklyn. The price was at first two dollars,

[1] Bucke, 24; Johnston, 42, 43.

which seems a little exorbitant for so slender and unpretending a volume, in shape and thickness a mere single copy of one of the smaller periodicals, bound in sea-green cloth, with the odd name, *Leaves of Grass*, in fanciful gilt lettering across its face. It was presently reduced to a dollar.

The other members of the household took the new venture very quietly. They had never been consulted in the matter—it had been Walt's affair, and only his; and the father's death must speedily have obliterated the little mark it made upon their minds.[1] "Hiawatha" was published about the same time, and a copy found its way into the house. The mother, turning the pages of both, considered that if Longfellow's were acknowledged as poetry, Walt's queer lines might pass muster too. Brother George fingered the book a little, and concluded it was not worth reading—that it was not in his line anyhow.

Doubtless they were relieved when the writing and printing were done, thinking that now surely Walt would return to the ways of mortals. For he had certainly fallen into the most irregular habits. He lay late abed, and came down still later to breakfast; wrote for a few hours, and when the table was being laid for dinner, took down his big hat and sauntered out, to return presently after the meal was over and the dishes cold.[2] He was not intentionally inconsiderate, but he was wholly engrossed in his work, and so pre-occupied that he must often have been tiresome enough.

After dinner he disappeared altogether, spending the afternoon and evening in his own leisurely way; setting type, perhaps, on his book at Andrew Rome's little office, and then going off to the opera or to some friend's; and, as he came back, staying far into the night in talk with the young fellows on the ferry, or on one of the East River steamers. Sometimes Hannah or Jeff might accompany him, but as a rule he went alone.

If his family anticipated any change in his ways when

[1] *In re*, 35, 36. [2] *In re*, 36.

he book was out, they were doomed to disappointment. The new task was but begun; the methods approved themselves to his mind and were pursued. He had weighed everything over again that summer, as soon as the book was out, going away to the eastern shore of Long Island for months of thought and solitude.[1]

As one turns the ninety broad pages of the volume, with their large type, their long flowing lines, their odd punctuation and occasional slips in orthography, every detail telling of the individuality behind it, one feels a little of what it must have meant to its maker. Five times, they say,[2] he wrote and re-wrote, made and un-made it, and looking back it seemed as though for seven years it had been struggling with him for utterance.

He had written tales and verses with the others, but this book he knew was different from them all. It was not so much his writing as himself. It was a man, and, withal, a new sort of man. For better or worse it was Walt Whitman, a figure familiar enough to the common people of Brooklyn and New York, familiar and beloved—he was not unconscious of his exceptional power of attraction[3]—but a Walt Whitman whom, as yet, they understood very little, who had, indeed, but recently come to an understanding of himself, and who was now approaching to speak with them. Here is the frank declaration of himself, which he proffers to all. Now, at last, we shall understand one another, he seems to say.

It was the old, old need for expression, the ultimate and deepest necessity of man, which urged him to his task and made its publication possible. Self-revelation is, of course, continuous and inevitable upon its unconscious side. It is only when it becomes a deliberate act that it astonishes the beholder to outcries of admiration or indignant horror.

Now the passion that overwhelms the poet is near

[1] Bucke, 26. [2] *Ib.*, 137. [3] *L. of G.*, 322.

akin to the lover's, for he is a lover whose heart is transfigured by the presence of Beauty, the Beloved, immanent in his world. And only by a naked avowal can such passion be satisfied.

There are those, of course, who regard every self-revelation as an immodesty, and who will and do avert their eyes from all passion, crying shame. But some at least of the others, who are well aware of the weakness of words, and know how few can use them perfectly, will reverently approach such a confession as Whitman's; not, indeed, as if it were that of a young girl, but as that of a man, naïve, yet virile, and of heroic sanity. And if they feel any shame they will frankly acknowledge it to be their own.

There is a kind of egoism which all self-revelation pre-supposes—the consciousness of possessing something supremely worthy of giving. This glorious pride is not incompatible with the profoundest humility, for it is divine, like the "I am" of Jehovah, the egoism of God.

If self-expression is the outcome of passion, its new incarnation has some of the wonder which attends a birth. The most virile of poets must here become as a woman; and the mystery which, for any mother, enwraps her first-born, clings for his Muse about her slender child by the great god of song. And when, as in the instance of this book of Whitman's, the children of the Muse betray in every feature the abandonment of the remote passion in which they were conceived, one cannot oneself handle them without emotion.

Walt regarded the book with undisguised pride and satisfaction. Mother-like, he eyed it as the future saviour of men. He saw it prophetic and large with destiny for America. He was confident that the public would be quick to recognise that quality in it for which they had been so long half-consciously waiting. The people would read it with a new delight, for surely it must be dynamic with the joy in which it was written.

He often said in later years that *Leaves of Grass* was

n attempt to put a happy man into literature.[1] Others ay discuss the optimism and the egoism of his pages, r of both qualities there is plenty in them, but, after ll, they are but secondary there. As to the qualities emselves, we may hold contrary and even disparaging pinions of their value, they will certainly at times repel s. But primarily these pages portray the happy man, nd a strong and happy personality has the divine gift of ttraction. Byron may dominate the whole of Europe r a generation by the dark Satanic splendour of his ride; Carlyle may hold us still by his fierce, lean assion for sincerity; but Whitman draws us by the utshining of his joy.

Happiness is not less infectious than melancholy or eal; and if it is genuine it is at least equally beyond rice. As far as it goes, it seems to indicate that a an may be perfectly adjusted to this world of circumtances, which to us appears so often contrary. A happy nd intelligent man of thirty-six, who has looked at life pen-eyed, and is neither handsome, rich nor famous worthy of attention. There is something half-divine bout him; and we cannot but hope he may prove to e prophetic of the race.

Some such thought must have been in Emerson's ind, when a few days after the perusal of *Leaves of rass*, he wrote his acknowledgment to its unknown uthor.[2] The letter has been often quoted, but it is o significant that I must quote it again. For no other iterary acknowledgment ever accorded to Whitman posesses anything like equal interest or importance.

Emerson was certainly the most notable force among merican writers at that time; and one might add, the nly figure of anything like the first magnitude. In reat Britain, the century had already produced the iterature which we associate with the names of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats and

[1] *L. of G.*, 443.
[2] Kennedy, 74, 75 n.; Dr. Platt's *Walt Whitman*, 27, 28, etc.

Carlyle, not to mention the earlier work of Tennyson, Browning and others. Emerson was the only American who could venture to claim rank with these, and then hardly equal literary rank. But in some respects his influence was greater, for his was certainly the clearest and fullest expression of the American spirit in letters. His words are therefore of importance to us :—

"Concord, Mass'tts, 21*st July*, 1855.

"Dear Sir,—I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of *Leaves of Grass*. I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seems the sterile and stingy nature, as if too much handiwork, or too much lymph in the temperament, were making our Western wits fat and mean. I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment that so delights us and which large perception only can inspire.

"I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start. I rubbed my eyes a little, to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging.

"I did not know until I last night saw the book advertised in a newspaper that I could trust the name as real and available for a post office. I wish to see my benefactor, and have felt much like striking my tasks and visiting New York to pay you my respects.

R. W. Emerson.

"Mr. Walter Whitman."

The epigrammatic style of the sentences, together with a strong flavour of sentiment, may set the reader in his turn rubbing his eyes, and wondering whether Emerson were consciously inditing a mere complimen-

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ry letter. But a second perusal renders such an idea ntenable. The epigram and the sentiment were parts the Emersonian mannerism. The letter was not nned in hot haste, after a first glance at the pages; a lay had taken place between reading and writing. oreover, when about this time a visitor called at Con-rd, he was sent on his way to Brooklyn as upon a lgrimage, with the significant words, "Americans road may now come home: unto us a man is born".[1] nother epigram, uttered perhaps with a gentle smile, it without a flavour of irony.

Emerson was then a man of fifty-two. The first and cond series of his lecture-essays had been published ore than ten years, and the first volume of his poems 1847; he was already famous in England as well as America. But though he was in certain quarters the nosure of admiration, in others he was the butt of dicule. This same year the London *Athenæum* praised ving because, as it said, his fancies were ideal, and not se Emerson's merely typographical—because they did ot consist, like the latter's, in the use of verbs for nouns, erratic punctuation, tumid epithets, which were start-ng rather than apposite, or in foreign forms and ioms.[2]

This though milder, is not unlike what many of the itics were soon to be saying with better reason of Whitman; and it is interesting to recall that in 1839, hen he was Whitman's age, Emerson was struggling escape from the limits of metre into a rhythm that ould suggest the wildest freedom; that should be firm as the tread of a horse,"[3] vindicate itself like the roke of a bell, and knock at prose and dulness like a annon ball; a rhythm which should be in itself a re-ewing of creation, because it was the form of a living irit. In later years, Emerson seems to have harked ack again to the more regular forms, believing them to orrespond to essential pulse-beats, or organic rhythm.

[1] Burroughs (*a*), 50. [2] 17th Feb., 1855, qu. in *Alibone*.
[3] *Emerson in Concord*, 227-233.

But his journal contains several little prose poems of the date of 1855 or 1856, notably the sketch of the "Two Rivers," outlined partly in loose irregular metres.

This search of the Concord prophet after a new free rhythmical form, must have predisposed him to interest in such a book as *Leaves of Grass*, where the laws of metre are in force no longer. But beyond this, the older man felt a close kinship with the younger. Whitman had declared himself unequivocally for the faith in life which was Emerson's gospel; and he smacked of the soil and air of America in a way that Emerson could not but love. Here at last was an actual incarnation of the ideas he had so long been hurling at the heads of the American people.

A beautiful and characteristic modesty is evident in the tone of the letter. Emerson might well have acknowledged the younger man as a pupil rather than as a benefactor; it was the same quality as had appeared in his reply to Frederika Bremer, when, five years earlier, she had been praising his own verses: "The Poet of America," he answered gravely, "is not yet come. When he comes he will sing quite differently."

The idea of an American poet was "in the air". Intellectual America was in revolt; she would remain no longer a mere province of Britain; her writers should shape themselves no more upon merely English models. Lowell in his "Biglow Papers" and Longfellow in "Hiawatha" were among many who sought to exploit the literary soil of the New World. Whatever their success in this, they can hardly be said to have inaugurated a new literature. No American Muse had yet appeared upon the Heights of Helicon to spread a new hush over the world, and by her singing raise the place of song perilously near to the stars. But though she had not appeared she was eagerly expected; and Emerson's letter is like nothing so much as the heralding cry that he had at last caught a glimpse of her across Whitman's pages. It was but a glimpse, and he was yet in doubt; he must come to Brooklyn himself, must meet this fellow face to face, and see.

CHAPTER VII

WHITMAN'S MANIFESTO

T is time that we ourselves took a view of the book, for we must see what Whitman had actually done uring these last months, and gather what further indi- tions we may as to his general notions of himself and the world.

The volume consists of a long preface or manifesto[1] of e New Poetry, and of twelve poems by way of example. he preface commences with a description of America, e greatest of poems, the largest and most stirring of ll the doings of men. "Here is action untied from rings, necessarily blind to particulars and details, agnificently moving in masses!" Here is a nation, ospitable, spacious, prolific; a nation whose common ople is a larger race than hitherto, demanding a larger oetry.

He describes the American poet, who is coming to waken men from their nightmare of shame to his own ith and joy. That poet is the lover of the universe, ho beholds with sure and mystic sight the perfection at underlies all imperfection, for he sees the Whole of ings. Past and future are present to him; and with em is the eternal soul. "The greatest poet does not oralise or make applications of morals—he knows the ul." His readers become loving, generous, democratic, oud, sociable, healthy, by beholding in his poems the auty of these qualities.

[1] This is given in full in O. L. Trigg's *Selections*; parts only, in *mp. Prose*, 256.

"Seer as he is, the poet," continues Whitman, "is no dreamer. He sees and creates actual forms. . . . To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it, you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the grey gull over the bay, or the mettlesome action of the blood horse, or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk, or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven, or the appearance of the moon afterward, with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The great poet has less a marked style, and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect, or originality, to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. . . . I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has, and be as regardless of observation. . . . You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me." [1]

His words never pose before the reader for ornament; they are living things. And for this very reason, he follows no models; his thought is living and original; it must find a new form for its perfect expression, as a new seed would find new growth and leafage.

The poet appeals to every reader as to an equal because in every reader he appeals to the Supreme Soul. Many may not hear him, but he appeals to all, and not to a coterie.

Whitman then proceeds to the praise of science. Knowledge, bringing back the mind from the supernatural to the actual, brings faith with it; and the soul is the divinest thing that science discovers in the universe. He turns to philosophy, and bids her deal candidly with whatsoever is real, recognise the eternal

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 261.

tendency of all things toward happiness, and cease to describe God as contending against some other principle.

The poet deals with truth and with the actual. All else is but a sham and impotent. For everywhere and always, the soul which is the one permanent reality, loves truth and responds to it.

The poet is by nature prudent, as one who knows the real purpose of the soul and of the universe, and would act in accordance with that knowledge. He accepts the impulses of the soul as the only final arguments; and only the deeds which it dictates appear to him to be profitable. Living in his age, and becoming its embodiment, he is therewithal a citizen of eternity. The future shall be his proof: will his song remain at her heart? Will it awaken, century after century, the divine unrest, and as it were, create new souls forever?

As for the priests and their work, they are done. The American poets shall fill their place, and the whole world shall answer to their message. Their words shall be in the English tongue—the language of "all who aspire"—but they shall be the very words of the people of America; they shall be native to the soil, and redolent of the air of the Republic. Such poets shall be America's own, and in them she will welcome her most illustrious visitors. They are her equals; for the soul of a man is as supreme as the soul of a nation. And America shall absorb them as affectionately as they have absorbed her.

Such is the gist of Whitman's manifesto. Nature the Soul and Freedom; Simplicity and Originality of Expression—these, its dominant notes, recall at once Rousseau, Wordsworth and Shelley, with many another; while certain passages remind the reader that *The Germ* was but recently published across the sea, the manifesto of another movement associated with the names of the Rossetti family and with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. But whatever the reminiscences it awakens, Whitman's preface is his own. The thoughts were not all originally his. But they had shaped themselves

newly in his brain and under his pen, and every line bears the stamp of originality.

Without staying to discuss the preface let us proceed to a rapid survey of the remaining pages. They are written, it would seem, for measured declamation, in a sort of free chant, which is neither prose nor verse, but whose lines coincide in length with natural pauses in the thought. Whitman himself spoke very deliberately, in a half drawl; he had a melodious baritone voice of considerable range and power, and one can well imagine how he would recite, when alone or with some intimate friend, the first lines, beginning:—

I celebrate myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a spear of summer grass.[1]

The lines are quite simple and direct; they are intended to place the reader at once in relation with the actual idler who recites them in the summer fields. He is an out-of-doors fellow, who lives whole-heartedly in the present, rejoicing in the world and observing it. He and his soul—he distinguishes decisively between the temporal and the eternal elements in himself whose equal balance, neither abdicating its place nor contesting that of the other, makes the harmony of his life—he and his soul commune together, and discover that the world means Love, and that the very grass is full of suggestions of immortality.

Everything indeed has its word for Walt Whitman; he understands what the streets are unconsciously saying; the animals of the country-side, the working men, the youths and the women, each and all are teaching him something of himself. All life appeals to him; he recognises himself in each of its myriad forms. And his thoughts are the half-conscious thoughts which lie in the minds of all. It is not only the happy and prosperous

[1] *L. of G.*, 29.

whom he represents, but the defeated also, and the outcast.

All things have their mystical meanings; but especially are manhood and womanhood divine. There is nothing more divine than they. As for him, he is proud, satisfied, august. He has no sympathy with whimperings, or conformity to the ideas of others. Is not he himself the fellow and equal of the supreme Beings, of the Night, the Earth, and the Sea?

He has faith in the issue of time; he fully accepts all reality as a part of the whole purpose. He at least will be fearless and frank, and conceal nothing; all desires shall be expressed by him.

And to him all the bodily functions are wonderful. His whole life is a wonder and delight, beyond the power of words to utter. Sounds especially he enjoys; alluding to the passionate emotions aroused in him by the opera, and adding an obscure, erotic dithyramb on the ecstasy of touch, the proof of reality, for we understand everything through touch.

Everything is seen by him to be full of meaning, because he himself is a microcosm and summary of the universe "stuccoed with quadrupeds and birds all over". He feels so vividly his personal kinship with the animals which are never pre-occupied about religion or property, that he thinks he must have passed through their present experience "huge times ago," to include it now in his own.[1] Forthwith, he strings together in a rapid succession of dazzling miniatures, some of the contents of his personal memory; pictures out of his experience or his imagination, that remain vivid and significant to him. His sympathy makes them actually real to him; the figures in them are each a part of himself. "I am the man," he cries, "I suffered, I was there."[2]

But he has his own distinct personality. He is the friendly and flowing savage, full of magnetism, health and power—

[1] *L. of G.*, 54. [2] *Ib.*, 59.

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,
They desire he should like them, and touch them, and speak to them,
and stay with them.

Behaviour lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, uncombed head,
and laughter, and naïveté,
Slow-stepping feet, and the common features, and the common modes
and emanations. . . .

He sees the divine that is in men, and how all the gods are latent in the race, and with them ever more besides. Even in the midst of their absurd littleness, which he fully recognises, he calls men to the reality of themselves, away from the religions of the priests to their own souls. He understands doubt very well, but he has faith, faith in an ultimate happiness for each and all.

He endeavours to express his sense of eternity, and of the friendliness of the world to him :—

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing—the vapour from the Nostrils of
Death—I know I was even there,
I waited unseen and always, and slept while God carried me through the
lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugged close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother, generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid—nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths, and deposited it with
care.

All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me,
Now I stand on this spot with my Soul.[1]

[1] *L. of G.*, 55.

Thus it seems to him that he has existed potentially from the beginning; that all the ages in succession have cared for him, and that now the whole world is full of his kin and lovers. He beholds the universe as gloriously infinite in its assured purpose: God has appointed a meeting-place where He waits for every soul. The way of the soul is eternal progress, and each one must follow that road. My pupils, he exclaims, shall become masters and excel me! They shall be wholesome, hearty, natural fellows, attracted to me because I neither write for money nor indoors.[1]

My religion is the worship of the soul. I am calm and composed, and satisfied about God, whom I do not in the least understand. Death and decay seem wholesome to him; they are the way of life by which he himself came to the present hour, wherein he realises the mystic reality, the life eternal, and the ineffable idea of happiness as the central purpose of the Universe:—

> Do you see, O my brothers and sisters?
> It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life, it is happiness.[2]

With an enigmatical farewell, he resumes his place in the life of the world, awaiting such of his readers as belong to him:—

> You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
> But I shall be good health to you, nevertheless,
> And filter and fibre your blood.
>
> Failing to fetch me at first, keep encouraged,
> Missing me one place, search another,
> I stop somewhere waiting for you.[3]

The other poems are pendants to the first, offering further exemplifications of the precepts of the preface. He appeals, for example,[4] to his fellow workmen and workwomen, that they realise their own greatness and immortality, their own individual destiny; for nothing can ever be so worthy of their reverence as their own soul.

[1] *L. of G.*, 75. [2] *Ib.*, 78. [3] *Ib.*, 79. [4] *Ib.*, 169.

He bids them employ and enjoy this hour to the full,[1] for death comes, and it will not be the same as life. Yet death also will be good to the soul—all the signs assure the soul that it will be satisfied; and there is nothing which does not share in the soul-life.

In dreams[2] he recognises some free utterances of the soul, and in sleep, the great equaliser of men. As he watches them asleep all become beautiful to him with the beauty of the soul, which men also call Heaven. Diseased or vile they may be, but their souls forever urge them along the appointed way towards the goal. He seems to see all souls meeting together in sleep, mysteriously to circle the earth, hand in hand. He entrusts himself to sleep with the same security as to Death and Birth.

At the sight and touch of the human body,[3] he kindles with the delight of a Renaissance painter, a Botticelli or a Michael Angelo. The very soul loves the flesh, and the contact of flesh with flesh rejoices it. He writes of the magic force of attraction embodied in a woman; nor of attraction only, but of emancipation. He extols the strength and joy which is embodied in a man. The body of every man and woman, says he, should be as sacred to you as your own, for the body is almost the soul, and to desecrate the bodies of the dead is a little thing beside the shame that we put upon the bodies of the living.

If life and the soul are sacred, the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man, is the token of manhood untainted,
And in man or woman, a clean, strong, firm-fibred body,
Is beautiful as the most beautiful face.[4]

He fills a page[5] with quick Hogarthian sketches of the lower types of faces, and then, turning about, acclaims the souls behind them as his equals. They too will duly come to themselves, following towards the light, after the Lord.

He loves thus to enlarge upon the poet's office as

[1] *L. of G.*, 333. [2] *Ib.*, 325. [3] *Ib.*, 81. [4] *Ib.* (1855). [5] *Ib.*, 353.

the Answerer[1] or sympathiser with all men, and how he should be welcome and familiar to each. In the poet's company, the soul of each one quickens. And yet the poet is no greater than the least; his verses are not nobler than the kindly deed of any poor old woman.

He writes of 1848, the year of Revolutions,[2] somewhat in the style of "Blood Money," and probably this page is one of the earliest of the fragments, and may date back to the year which it celebrates. In spite of the successes of tyranny, and the failures of the young men of Europe, he sees that Liberty herself is never foiled.

By way of sharp contrast[3] he directs a mocking and colloquial page of satire against the 'cute Bostonians of 1854. Whitman's dislike of Boston is never for a moment concealed; Jonathan the Yankee he detests. And now he brings home to him the profits of his bargaining; he has dethroned King George only to set up in his place this Republican President, Pierce of New Hampshire, who in these loud-echoing streets employs the strength of America upon the capture of a fugitive slave.

Sometimes he is autobiographical.[4] "There was a child went forth,"—he recites—a country boy who, at West Hills and in Brooklyn, absorbed all the sights and sounds of his world into himself; till the early lilacs, the morning-glories, and the orchard blossom, the quarrelsome and the friendly boys and the bare-footed negro-children all became a part of him. His parents, too, in the daily life of the home as well as by heredity, entered into his make-up; the mother, wholesome, quiet and gentle, the father, virile and hot-tempered, with a streak of craft and astuteness running through him. And as they became a part of me, he says, so now they shall become a part of you that read this page.

Or at his naïvest, we see him standing open-mouthed and amazed, like a very child, before the sheer naked facts of his own story from the date of his birth to the

[1] *L. of G.*, 134. [2] *Ib.*, 211. [3] *Ib.*, 209. [4] *Ib.*, 282.

present hour;[1] and endeavouring to evoke a similar naïve attitude in the reader, not indeed towards the date of Whitman's birth, but towards that of his own.

Upon a kindred note we turn the last page also[2]—for it is a proclamation of reverence, reverence for all the old myths; reverence for the high ideals; reverence too for Youth and for Age, for Speech and Silence, for true Wealth and true Poverty, always with stress upon the last member of each pair; for America, too, and for the Earth with its ineffable future; for Truth, for Justice, for Goodness—ay, and, he adds with conscious paradox, for Wickedness as well; above all for Life, but not less for Death. Great is Life, he concludes:—

> Great is Life, real and mystical wherever and whoever:
> Great is Death:—sure as Life holds all parts together, Death holds all parts together:
> Sure as the stars return again after they merge in the light, Death is great as Life.

How are we to sum up these pages, and figure out what it is they come to? No summary is likely to do justice to a book of poetry, which demonstrates itself by wholly other methods than argument, and it would be foolish for me to attempt it. But there is one point with which I must make shift to deal.

Beginning with a forecast of the New Poetry, as of something which should be in its essence indigenous to America, the natural expression of a new spirit and race and of its attitude towards the Self and the Universe, Whitman has boldly given examples to show what it was he meant. What are we to say of these? Do they give us a new art-form? or, if you will, a new kind of poetry? Do they bring us material for some new law of rhythm or metre?

These are deep questions, and dangerous to answer. For myself, I can but give an affirmative to them, accepting the smiles of the incredulous. And I must do so without a discussion which would here be tedious, even if I were able to make it profitable.

[1] *L. of G.*, 304. [2] *Ib.* (ed. 1855).

There is a simple test of the whole matter which one may oneself apply : Does Whitman's method of writing arouse, in those who can read it with enjoyment, an emotion distinct in character from that aroused by the methods of all other poets? Does *Leaves of Grass* awake some quality of the Soul which answers neither to the words of Tennyson nor Browning, Emerson nor Carlyle? The proof by emotional reaction requires some skill in self-observation and more impartiality ; but, on the whole, I think those who have tried it fairly seem to take my part, and to answer emphatically in the affirmative.

What then is this emotion which Whitman alone, or in special measure, evokes? It is a further hard but fair question, for it involves Whitman's personality, and this book is an attempt to answer it. Briefly, it is the complex but harmonious emotion which possesses a sane full-blooded man of fully awakened soul, when he realises the presence of the Eternal and Universal incarnate in some "spear of summer grass". One may call it the religious emotion ; but it is not the emotion of any other religious poetry, saving perhaps some of the Hebrew prophets : and every prophet has his own cry. It is the emotion of a religion which is as large as the largest conceptions which man has yet formed of life ; for Whitman, apart from any limitations in his thought, appears to have lived more fully and with fuller conscious purpose than did other men.

In order to make oneself understood at all one speaks in hyperbole, and doubtless I exaggerate. Whitman was, of course, no God among men, nor was he greater than other poets ; in a sense he was even less than the least of them, so subjective was his genius ; but since he consciously evokes a new emotion, he has his place among true artists, for Art is the power of evoking the emotion in others which one intends. And since the new emotion seems to be altogether ennobling when it is fully realised, being at once enlarging and integrating to the soul, we ought the more gladly to hail and acknowledge him.

I say a new emotion, not meaning, of course, that h is alone in calling up the soul, for no great poetry car leave the soul unstirred; but that no poetry of moder times stirs the soul in the same manner as does that o this full-natured man. So far, I think, we may acknow ledge Whitman's success as a poet, and I am not con cerned to urge it further. There are many who do no respond to his writings in the way I have indicated, an they naturally refuse him the title. There are other who do, and who accord it to him; and I confess I an of the latter.

The only American poet who approaches him in sen timent is Emerson. Poems like "Each and All," witl its motive of the cosmic unity, "The perfect Whole," o "Brahma," with its reconciling all-inclusiveness, are ver near in thought to Whitman; so again is "Merlin with its

> Great is the art,
> Great be the manners of the bard;
> He shall not his brain encumber
> With the coil of rhyme and number,—

or "Woodnotes"—"God hid the whole world in th heart"—or the exclamation "When worlds of lover hem thee in" of the "Threnody"; or his "Test," whe he hangs his verses in the wind. The inspiration of th two men made them akin; but it was far from identica There are sides of *Leaves of Grass* which are absen from Emerson's writings, just as there are phases o Emerson's thought which are never really touched b Whitman. But above all, while the works of both ar exhilarating to the soul, the emotional reactions fro them are quite distinct.

Considering Emerson's influence at the time upon a that was most virile in American thought, we migh feel certain that some part at least of his teaching ha illuminated Whitman's mind, and there is sufficien evidence in his own writings to prove it.[1] He sai indeed, that it was Emerson who led him to a spiritu

[1] Camden, ix., 160; notes to mag. art. of May, 1847.

understanding of America, and who finally brought his simmering ideas to the boil.[1] But he also vehemently asserted the independence of *Leaves of Grass* from any direct Emersonian or other literary influence; and in this the internal evidence of his book supports him. It is really impossible to confuse the flavours of Whitman and of Emerson.

One more comparison, and I will pursue the story. There is much which Whitman obviously shares with Shelley. Their kinship of inspiration is too significant for a passing note, and might well be followed over many pages. The writer of *Leaves of Grass*, and the youthful author of *Queen Mab*, had drunk at the same fountain of love and wonder.[2]

Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* should be read alongside of the Preface of 1855. In it also you will find it stated that the poet lives in the consciousness of the whole; that he is not to be bound by metrical custom, the distinction between poets and prose-writers being but a vulgar error; it is sufficient if his periods are harmonious and rhythmical. Poetry is therein discovered as the great instrument of morality, for it exercises and therefore strengthens the imagination, which is the organ of love—that going-out of a man from himself to others, in which morality finds the final expression.

Here, as in Whitman's pages, the permanence of poetry is asserted; its significance is not to be exhausted by the generation in which it found expression. Poetry is the motive power of action and creates utilities. It is the root and blossom of science and philosophy. Poetry is the interpenetration of a diviner nature with our own; it turns all things to loveliness, and strips off that film of use and wont which holds our eyes from the vision of wonder. The great poets are men of supreme virtue and consummate prudence. They are the world's law-givers.

[1] Letter in Appendix to *L. of G.* (1856) and Trowbridge, *op. cit.*

[2] It is interesting to recall that *Prometheus Unbound* was written in the year of Whitman's birth.

It must be enough for us to have noted the paralle which might easily be pressed too far. There are re gions of thought and expression in which their oppo sition would, of course, appear even more striking; w need not pursue the subject, remembering that muc of what they share derives from the influence whic we associate with the works of Rousseau.

Whatever our opinion of Whitman's astonishin "piece of wit and wisdom," we cannot be surprise that in some quarters it was received with contemp tuous silence, and in others with prompt and fran abuse. The *Boston Intelligencer*,[1] for instance, credite it to some escaped lunatic; the *Criterion*[2] to a ma possessed of the soul of a sentimental donkey that ha died of disappointed love; while the *London Critic*,[3] com paring him to Caliban, declared he should be whippe by the public executioner.

It is, perhaps, more astonishing that some of th leading journals and reviews of America—the *Nort American Review*, *Putnam's Monthly*, and the *New Yor Tribune*[4]—for example, noticed the book at some lengt and with friendly forbearance, if not with actual ac clamation. The first of these gave the book, in it January issue (1856), three pages of discriminatin welcome from the pen of Edward E. Hale, a religiou minister of liberal mind and warm heart, whose ow inner experience was not without resemblance to Whit man's in its harmonious development and absence o spiritual conflict.[5]

Whitman was probably prepared for the abuse; was the indifference of the public which astonishe him. At first, it would seem, there was no sale what ever for the book;[6] and Emerson was the only one o its readers who found it specially significant.

Having spent the summer months in solitude in th

[1] Bucke, 198. [2] *Ib.*, 197. [3] *Ib.*, 196; *In re*, 60.
[4] *N. A. R.*, January, 1856; *Trib.*, 23rd July, 1855.
[5] W. James, *Var. of Relig. Experience*, 82-83.
[6] Bucke, 138; Burroughs, etc.

country,[1] Whitman decided upon a somewhat questionable method of advertisement: he contributed unsigned notices of his book to the *Brooklyn Times*,[2] with which he appears to have been connected,[3] and to a phrenological sheet issued by Fowler and Wells, his agents on Broadway. He fortified himself[4] for his task by observing that Leigh Hunt had written for the Press upon his own work, and even claimed the high example of Dante.

These articles, whose anonymity seems to infringe on the impartiality of the Press, and to be in some sense a breach of journalistic honour, are not a little astonishing. That in the phrenological journal may, perhaps, be dismissed as a mere publishers' circular or puff, contributed, as such things frequently are, by the writer. As to the other, Whitman was for a while the editor of the *Brooklyn Times*, and may have written on himself while serving in this capacity, or perhaps at the request of the actual editor, doubtless his personal friend. Or, again, if we would excuse, or rather explain, his action, we may regard the reviews as his own attempt to look impersonally at his work.

Whatever we may think of the moral aspect of the notices, or however we may account for them, they have considerable interest as further expositions of his purpose, re-inforcing the Preface after an interval of meditation. As such, and as a corrective of popular misapprehensions, he doubtless intended them. In these pages he lays special emphasis on the American character of his work. He notes his studied avoidance of all foreign similes and classical allusions. He compares himself with Tennyson and other poets, only to declare that he is alone in understanding the new poetry, which will not aim at external completeness and finish, but at infinite suggestion; which will be an infallible and unforgettable hint—a living seed, not merely of thought, but of that emotional force which is of the Soul and alone can mould personality.

[1] Bucke, 26. [2] *In re*, 13, 32; Bucke, 195.
[3] *Atlantic Monthly*, xcii., 679. [4] Camden, ix., 119.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MYSTIC

IN September, 1855, Mr. Moncure Conway, havin heard of Whitman during a visit to Concor called upon him in Brooklyn, with an introduction fro Emerson. Walt was then living with his family in on of a row of small artisans' houses, in Ryerton Street out of Myrtle Avenue. At the moment, however, h was correcting proofs in the little office where his boo had been printed, and wore a workman's striped blu shirt, open at the throat. A few days later, he calle upon Mr. Conway, his sister and another lady, at th Metropolitan Hotel, where his manners and conversa tion were enjoyed and approved. He was then garbe in "the baize coat and chequered shirt" in which h appears in the *Leaves of Grass* portrait.

Mr. Conway in his story has somewhat confused th details of these visits with those of another paid by hi upon a Sunday morning some two years later, when th Whitmans seem to have moved to a more commodiou house on North Portland Avenue. The matter is n important, and we may follow the main lines of th picturesque account which he contributed in Octobe 1866, to the *Fortnightly Review*.[2]

According to this narrative, Whitman was discovere basking in the hot sunshine on some waste land ou side Brooklyn. He was wearing the rough workman clothes of his choice, was as brown as the soil and a

[1] M. D. Conway, *Autobiography*.
[2] *Fort. Rev.*, vi., 538; Kennedy, 51.

grey as the grass bents. His visitor was at once impressed by the exceptional largeness and reality of the man, and by a subtle delicacy of feeling for which *Leaves of Grass* does not appear to have prepared him. Whitman was slow, serene, gracious; in spite of the grey in his hair and beard, and the deep furrows across his brow, his full red face and quiet blue-grey eyes were almost those of a child.

Returning to the house, the visitor noticed a quality about him which belonged by rights to the line-engraving of Bacchus which hung in the bare room he occupied. Like a Greek hero-god, he made one ask oneself whether he was merely human. And after crossing the bay with him, and bathing and sauntering along the beach of Staten Island, the visitor seems to have left in a condition of almost painful excitement, unable to give his thought to anything but Whitman.

A few days later, according to this account, Conway found him setting type for the next edition of his book. Although he was still writing occasionally for the press, *Leaves of Grass* continued to provide his principal occupation. They crossed the ferry together and rambled about New York. Nearly every artisan they met greeted Walt affectionately as an old friend, and not one of them knew him as a poet.

Together they went to the Tombs prison, Whitman always having acquaintances among the outcasts of society, and often visiting them in detention, both here and at Sing-Sing. Here, Conway had an opportunity of estimating the power over others which was wielded by this personality, whose latent force had so much moved himself. The prisoners confided in him, and on behalf of one he interviewed the governor of the prison. The victim had been detained for trial on some petty charge in an unhealthy cell. Whitman repeated the man's story, and characterised it, with a sort of religious emphasis and deliberation, as a "damned shame". It was manifestly upon the tip of the official tongue to rebuke Walt for impertinence; but though he was dressed as an artisan, his quiet determined gaze was

too much for the autocrat, who gave way before it an ordered the prisoner to be transferred to better quarters

Other distinguished visitors called on him from tim to time. Of Emerson's own visits we know next t nothing, but they were frequent and very welcome sometimes ending with a dinner at Astor House. W have a glimpse of Lord Houghton, sharing a dish roast apples with his friendly host.[1] Ward Beeche the famous Brooklyn preacher, was among the callers and it was on their way from his church that, on Sun day, 9th November, 1856, Mrs. Whitman, in her son absence, received Bronson Alcott and Thoreau.

Both men belonged to the circle of Emerson's Co cord intimates, and both have left a record of the su cessful renewal of their visit upon the following day The lovable, mystical, oracular Alcott, the delight of h friends, seems to have been greatly attracted by Whi man, whom he knew already, and of whom he h spoken in terms of the highest praise. The mother, h found on that first visit, stately and sensible, full faith in her son "Walter"; full, too, in his absence, his praises, as being from his childhood up both goo and wise, the faithful and beloved counsellor of brothe and sisters.

They spent two delightful hours with Walt next da a Philadelphia lady accompanying them and shari their intercourse with "the very god Pan," as Alco styles him. The conversation was to have been r newed on the morrow, but Walt failed to put in appearance. He was apt to be vague about such a pointments, and one could never be sure that he f himself bound by them. Like a Quaker of the o school, he followed the direction of the hour, and h promises were tentative and well guarded.

Thoreau, too, the naturalist philosopher of Walde wrote down his impressions of the interview. He w puzzled by Whitman, finding him in many ways

[1] *In re*, 36. [2] See *Familiar Letters of H. D. Thoreau*, 339-349.

strange and surprising being, outside the range of his experience. Rough, large and masculine but sweet—essentially a gentleman, he says; but the title is paradoxical and inappropriate, and he qualifies it immediately by adding that he was coarse not fine. As to the last point, after vigorously debating it, Whitman and he appear to have retained contrary convictions. But Whitman himself would have been the first to disclaim refinement, a quality which he associated with sterility. If Thoreau had said he was elemental, we would not now dissent.

They were not likely to understand one another. The two men present a remarkable contrast, though on certain sides they have much in common. Thoreau was about two years the older; his principal book of essays, called *Walden* after the site of his hermitage, had been published when he was about Whitman's age. Physically he was most unlike the genial red-faced giant opposite to him. Slight and rather short, with long arms and sloping shoulders; mouth, eyes and nose seemed to tell of solitary concentrated thought. There was something in his face of the frontiersman, that woodland look one sees also in Lincoln's portraits; something, too, of the shyness wood creatures have.

He disliked and avoided the generality of men. In this he would compare himself with Emerson, who found society a refuge from the shabbiness of life's commonplace, while Thoreau's own resource was always solitude. He was continually being surprised by the vulgarity of himself and of his fellows, continually flushing with shame, personal or vicarious; and he sought and found a refuge in the pure and lonely spirit that haunted Walden Pool.[1]

Whitman, on the other hand, though he loved solitude, seems, even in solitude, to have craved for movement. In this he was very far from the orientalism of Thoreau and its strenuous seeking after peace. He loved progress. His genius belonged not to the forest pool, whose re-

[1] F. B. Sanborn's *Thoreau*, 307; *cf.* H. S. Salt's *Thoreau*, 293.

flections were unrippled by a breeze—the mirror of the abstract mind—but to the surging passion of the ocean beach.

Similarly, in his attitude towards men, he was far removed from both Thoreau and Emerson. Emerson confessed he could not quite understand what Whitman so enjoyed in the society of the common people; and many a Democrat, if he were only as honest, would make the same confession. It was not that Emerson was in any sense of the word a snob; but the emotional side of his nature responded but feebly to certain of the elemental notes whose vibration is felt perhaps more frequently among the common people than elsewhere. Emerson's fellowship was largely upon intellectual fields: Whitman's almost wholly upon the more emotional.

Thoreau found society in disembodied thought, and emotional fellowship in the woods. But to Whitman the sheer contact with people, and especially the unsophisticated natural folk of the class into which he was born and among whom he was bred, was not only a pleasure but a tonic which he could barely exist without. In solitude, he became after a time, heavy, inert, lethargic. His mind itself seemed to grow stale. He was a mere pool of water left upon the beach, which loses virtue in its stagnant isolation.

Whitman seems to have been exceptionally conscious of the stream of electric life which is the great attractive power of a city, and which in itself tends to draw all young men and women into its current. It buoyed him up and carried him, giving him a sense of exaltation only to be compared with that which other poets have derived from the mountains, or the wind out of the West. His large body and intuitive mind craved for the magnetic stimulus and suggestion of people moving about him; he did not look to them to save him from the commonplace, nor did he shrink from them as bringing him new burdens of a common shame.

Coarse, actual, living humanity was his supreme interest and passion. And the delicacy and refinement

of the scholar was dreadful to him, because it separated him instantly from the vulgar and common folk. He was one of the roughs, he used to say; and so he was, but with a difference. It was this that puzzled his Concord friends who were quick to feel but slow to understand it. Their perplexity did not, however, turn into mistrust; for their appreciation of all that they understood was full and generous.

Thoreau hardly knew whether he was more repelled or attracted by this "great fellow" who seemed to be the personification of Democracy.[1] Like Tennyson at a later date, he was unable to define him, but stood convinced that he was "a great big something".[2] A little more than human, Thoreau added; meaning a little larger than normal human development.

In any case, the man was an enigma. He wrote of those relations between men and women for which the poets choose the subtlest and most delicate words in their treasury, in syllables which seemed to Thoreau like those of animals which had not attained to speech. Yet even so, he spoke more truth, beast-like as his voice sounded, than the others. And Thoreau frankly reminded himself, if Whitman made him blush the fault might not be Whitman's after all.

They did not talk very much or very deeply, as there were four to share the conversation. Thoreau, too, was in a rather cynical mood, and spoke slightingly of Brooklyn and America and her politics, which in itself was enough to chill the stream of intercourse. But they found a common interest in the Oriental writers with whom Whitman was but vaguely acquainted, the scholar advising upon translations. Thoreau and Emerson had both noted the resemblance between *Leaves of Grass* and some of the sacred writings of India; and the latter once humorously described the *Leaves* as a mixture of the *Bhagavad-Gítá*[3] and the *New York Herald*.[4]

[1] *Fam. Letters*, 347.
[2] Camden, lxxii.; *cf. Life of A. Tennyson*, ii., 424.
[3] A new translation of the great Indian classic had just appeared.
[4] Kennedy, 78.

Thoreau died in 1862, and this was probably their only meeting.

Thoreau carried off with him a copy of the new edition of Whitman's poems, fresh from the press, and some of the remarks I have alluded to refer especially to its contents, and to several of the new poems which we must now briefly consider, for it is obviously impossible to give any worthy account of Whitman without attempting at least to outline the successive expressions of his own views about himself, as they are set forth in his book.

None of the twenty new *Leaves* appears so important as the "Song of Myself," but among them are some of the finest and most suggestive pages he ever wrote, notably the "Poem of Salutation," and the "Poem of the Road".[1] The book is now shorn of its prose preface, which would be a serious loss if large portions of it were not to be found broken into lines, and otherwise slightly altered, upon the later pages. It had been used as a quarry for poems, and some of the blocks underwent but little trimming.

In the "Salutation," he identifies himself elaborately and in much detail, with all peoples of the globe, finding equals and lovers in every land. The universal survey is faithfully made; the poem is like a rapid passage through a gallery of pictures, and regarded as a whole, suggests the outlines of the world-wide field which its author desires the reader to view. Whitman asserts his comprehensive sympathy; like America he includes all men. He is one with them in their common humanity, and sympathises with them individually in the main purposes and desires of their lives.

The poem opens in the form of question and answer. Looking into Whitman's face, the questioner sees as it were a whole world lying latent within his gaze and becoming actual as he looks. Taking the poet's hand, he begs him to explain: Walt accedes with readiness, and immediately forgets the questioner.

[1] *L. of G.*, 112, 120.

The subject of the poem—man as the microcosm not only of the universe but of the Race—is not perhaps novel; but its meaning is none the less difficult to expound. For it bears directly upon the cosmic consciousness, in which, as I have said, many of us are wanting. There are some, however, who are at times aware of moods in which they realise the symbolic character of all objects; they see them, that is to say, as forms through which vivid emotions are conveyed to the soul. At such moments, the whole world becomes for them a complex of these symbols, whose authenticity they can no more doubt than the meaning of daily speech, and whose ultimate significance is of an infinite content, which forever unfolds before them.

Such moods were evidently frequent with Whitman, and perhaps became the norm of his consciousness. In them his eyes read the world, as though it were the writing of that infinite and supreme Soul which was himself, and yet not himself; that Soul of All, with which his consciousness was become mystically one. He felt the actual thrill and meaning of the World's Words; words which he more fully describes or rather tries to suggest, in another poem, afterwards known as the "Song of the Rolling Earth".[1] In order to explain Whitman's meaning one would need to make a study of the roots of this kind of symbolism, a task which is here impracticable. We must be content instead with a glance at the poem itself.

> Earth, round, rolling, compact—suns, moons, animals—all these are words to be said,"[2]

he asserts; vast words, not indeed of dots and strokes, nor of sounds, but of real things which exist and are uttered. I myself, and not my name, he says suggestively, is the real word which the Soul understands. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, not my words but Me, The Word. The words of great poets are

[1] *L. of G.*, 176.
[2] *L. of G.* (1860), 329; *cf. An American Primer*, by W. W. (1904).

different from those of mere singers and minor poets, because they suggest these ultimate words, these presences and symbols. A symbol, be it remembered, always using the word in the sense indicated, is no arbitrary sign, it is a form or appearance, which seen *through* the eye—to use Blake's happy formula—presents to the imagination an unimpeachable, distinct emotional concept.

To Whitman, everything became thus symbolic. He saw the Earth itself—the whole world about him—as a symbol, infallibly presenting to him a distinguishable idea or meaning; not indeed a thought, for the word fails to express something which must clearly be supra-intellectual—the perception of a conscious state of emotion.

Of what then was the Earth a symbol to Whitman's sight? He says, frankly enough,[1] that he cannot convey the idea in print; but that as far as he can suggest it, it is one of progress, or amelioration; it is generous, calm, subtle; it includes the idea of expression, or the bearing of fruit; it is the acceptance of all things, and it is the general purpose which underlies them all.

I fear that those who seek for simple explanations in plain words will scarcely be satisfied with this. Perhaps Whitman is only reasserting in his own manner the familiar adage that God is the prince of poets, and that the universe is His Chapbook which He offers to all. If so, he either gives a new meaning to the words, or he has rediscovered their old vital sense and redeemed them from the stigma of rhetoric. I do not know whether after all the simple-sounding words are not the more elusive.

The Words of the Earth-Mother spoken to her children are, he would have us believe, ultimate and infallible; all things may be tried by them. That is what he means when he says he has read his poems over in the open air. He has proved them thus to see if their suggestion is that of the Earth. She sits, as it were, with

[1] *L. of G.*, 179.

her back turned toward her children,[1] but in her hand she holds a mirror, the clear mirror of appearances which are true, and in that mirror we may see ourselves and her.

With her ample back toward every beholder,
With the fascinations of youth, and equal fascinations of age,
Sits she whom I too love like the rest—sits undisturb'd,
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror, while her eyes glance back from it,
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

How much we can see, depends upon our own character. To the perfect man, the Face of the Mother is perfect: to the man ashamed, disfigured, broken, it appears to be such as he. Only the pure behold the Truth. There is no merely intellectual test of truth, for truth is known only by the Soul. As one looks into the mirror, and reads the thought behind appearances, not with the intellect but with the sight of the awakened soul, one grows to understand what Progress means, one sees a little further into the secrets of Love; one learns that the divine Love neither invites nor refuses.

The Sayers of Words are those who with pure insight —or as Coleridge would say, Imagination—behold things as they are apprehended by the cosmic consciousness; and thus beholding them as they truly are, find words which hint to the soul of that Reality which speaks through all appearance. After the sayers come the singers, the Poets who, building words together, create new worlds.

In another poem, the Open Road [2] becomes the symbol of Freedom, Acceptance, Sanity, Comradeship, Immortality and Eternal Battles.

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me, leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune—I am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Strong and content, I travel the open road.

(1860.)

[1] *L. of G.*, 177. [2] *Ib.*, 120.

Among the best known and most popular of the *Leaves of Grass*, it is also among those which are most filled with recondite and mystic meanings. Over these we must not linger, save to note the indication of the mystic sense by phrases like "the float of the sight of things" and "the efflux of the Soul". The poem as a whole is marked by musical cadences, and is vivid from end to end with courage and the open air.

After the "Song of Myself," Thoreau preferred the "Sun-down Poem," which describes the crossing of Brooklyn Ferry.[1] It is filled with the thought that, even after half a century and in our own day, when others than he will be crossing, still he will be with them there unseen. The thoughts that come to him show him the Soul wrapt around in unconsciousness, and the things which, by contact with the clean senses, are presently realised as meanings by the Soul. The poem is a fine example of Whitman's delight in movement, in masses of people, and in the surroundings of his city.

In the "Clef-poem,"[2] intended to strike the key-note, not only for his poems, but as it were for the universe itself with its innumerable meanings, he tells how, standing on the beach at night alone, he realised that all things —soul and body, past and future, here and there—are interlocked and spanned by a vast homogeneity of essence. The knowledge sweeps away all possibilities of anxiety about the future after death; experience can never fail to feed the soul. It contents him also with the present: no experience can ever be more wonderful to him than this of to-night, when he lies upon the breast of the Mother of his being. The future can be nothing but an eternal unfolding of this that he beholds already present in his body and Soul.

While dwelling upon the symbolical mysticism which cannot be ignored in Whitman's whole habit of thought, I may add a further word upon its character.[3] Mysticism appears under several forms. The Indian guru,

[1] *L. of G.*, 129. [2] *Ib.*, 207; ('60), 229-31. [3] See also p. 166.

winning the eternal consciousness by long practices in the gymnasium of the mind; the lover discovering it through the fiery gateways, and tear-washed windows of passion; the poet seeking it in the eyes of the Beauty that was before the beginning of the world; the Quaker awaiting its coming in silence and simplicity; the Catholic preparing for it by prayer and fasting, by ritual and ceremony; the lover of nature discovering it among her solitudes; the lover of man entering into it only by faith, in the strenuous service of his kind: all these bear witness to the many ways of experience along which the deep waters flow.

Belonging to no school, Whitman had relations with several of the mystical groups; he had least, I suppose, with that which seeks the occult by traditional crystal-gazing and the media of hypnotic trances or the dreams produced by anæsthetic drugs. He was a mystic because wonders beset him all about on the open road of his soul. In him mysticism was never associated with pathological symptoms; it was, as he himself suggests, the flower and proof of his sanity, soundness and health.

He had not learnt his lore from books. Plato and Plotinus, Buddha and Boehme, were alike but half-familiar to him; he never studied them closely as a disciple should. His thought may have been quickened by old Elias Hicks, and strengthened occasionally by contact with the Friends. It often recalls the more leonine, less catholic spirit of George Fox; and the vision of the Soul, standing like an unseen companion by the side of every man, woman, and child, ready to appear at the first clear call of deep to human deep, was ever present to them both, and in itself explains much that must otherwise remain incomprehensible in their attitude. But the world of Whitman was that of the nineteenth century, not of the seventeenth: Carlyle, Goethe and Lincoln, had taken the places of Calvin, Milton and Cromwell. In many aspects the mysticism of *Leaves of Grass* is nearer to that of *The Republic* and *The Symposium*, than to that of Fox's *Epistles* and *Journal;* nearer, that is, to the Greek synthesis, than to the evangelical ardour of the

Puritan. Temperance he loved, but he hated the narrowness of negations.

To return to the book: the thought of the sanity of the Earth is brought to bear upon the problem of evil in a poem[1] which describes how, in spite of the mass of corruption returned to it by disease and death, the earth neutralises all by the chemistry of its laws and life. With calm and patient acceptance of evil, nature refuses nothing, but ever provides man anew with innocent and divine materials. And such, it would seem, is the inherent character of the Universe, and therefore of the Soul.

A poem,[2] whose opening cadences were suggested by the drip, drip, drip, of the rain from the eaves, presents the Broadaxe as the true emblem of America, Whitman's substitute for the Eagle whose wings are always spread.

Broad-axe, shapely, naked, wan!
Head from the mother's bowels drawn!
Wooded flesh and metal bone! limb only one and lip only one!
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown! helve produced from a little seed sown!
Resting the grass amid and upon,
To be leaned, and to lean on.

Here we enter the picturesque, muscular world of wood-cutters and carpenters so familiar to the author, and we are reminded of the older and more sinister uses and products of the axe. Seen by Whitman, the Broad axe itself is a poem that tells of strenuous America, with her free heroic life and the comradeship of her Western cities, great with the greatness of their common folk. It tells him of the woman of America, self-possessed and strong; and of large, natural, naïve types of manhood. It even prophecies to him of Walt Whitman, and sings the "Song of Myself," the message of the noble fierce undying Self. As a Cuvier can reconstruct an undiscovered creature from a single fossil bone, so might the poet seer have foretold America by this symbol of an axe.

The idea of America is further expounded in several

[1] *L. of G.*, 285. [2] *Ib.*, 148.

other poems, especially in the longest of the additions, which was afterwards expanded into "By Blue Ontario's Shore".[1] Much of its essential thought, however, and some of its actual phrasing belongs to the old Preface, and has therefore been already noted. It dwells on the potential equality of every citizen in the sight of America herself, an equality based upon the divine Soul which is in each; and also, upon Liberty, which is the ultimate and essential element of all individual life.

The thought of America calls up in Whitman's mind the picture of that poet, that "Soul of Love and tongue of fire," who will utter the idea which is America, and which alone can integrate her diverse peoples into one. And here Whitman flings off his cloak which concealed him in the Preface, and openly announces that it is he himself who incarnates the spirit of the land.

Fall behind me, States!
A man, before all—myself, typical, before all.

Give me the pay I have served for!
Give me to speak beautiful words! take all the rest;
I have loved the earth, sun, animals—I have despised riches,
I have given alms to every one that asked, stood up for the stupid and crazy, devoted my income and labour to others,
I have hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience and indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat to nothing known or unknown,
I have gone freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families,
I have read these leaves to myself in the open air—I have tried them by trees, stars, rivers,
I have dismissed whatever insulted my own Soul or defiled my body,
I have claimed nothing to myself which I have not carefully claimed for others on the same terms,
I have studied my land, its idioms and men,
I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the taste of myself,
I reject none, I permit all,
Whom I have staid with once I have found longing for me ever afterward.[2]

The poet is that equable sane man, in whose vision alone all things find and are seen in their proper place, for he sees each *sub specie aeternitatis*—in its eternal aspect.

[1] *L. of G.*, 264. [2] *Ib.* (1860), 121.

But while thus boldly declaring himself as the man that should come, he has of course no desire to stand alone, and attempts to outline the equipment necessary for future American poets. They must not only identify themselves in every possible way with America, they must be themselves creative and virile. Those who criticise, explain and adjudge, can only create a literary soil; they cannot produce the flower and fruit of poetry.

Returning to his favourite adage that a man is as great as a nation, he asserts that the true poet is America; frankly reading himself as a whole, he will see the meanings of America. Is then America also a symbol? Assuredly. She is the Republic; she is the Kingdom of God; she is Blake's Jerusalem; but behold, she is already founded and four-square upon the solid earth.

That he was open-eyed to the materialistic spirit rampant throughout the continent while he was writing, is clearly shown in the bitter mockery of "Respondez,"[1] a poem afterwards suppressed. It is a challenge to thought; an ironic assertion of things that are false and futile, and which yet parade as realities. Though suggestive it is obscure, and its subsequent omission was wise.

Thoughts of the destiny of America,[2] and of the evil and imperfection which he saw about him, hindering, as it seemed, the realisation of that destiny, and of the destiny of individual souls, must often have moved him to passionate longing. He was not one of those who confuse good with evil; he always recognised the difference between right and wrong as among the eternal distinctions which could never cease to hold true. He hated sin as he hated disease, and recognised both as threatening and actual.

If he rarely denounces, it is because he has seen that the way of the soul is along the path of love and not of fear or of hate; and because he recognises the office of

[1] *L. of G.* (1860), 166. [2] *Ib.*, 171-74; *cf. L. of G.*, 213.

sin in the story of the soul. He is not anxious about vice or virtue, but only about life and love. Love, at its fullest, is something different from virtue; it contains elements which virtue can never possess, and which most ethical codes consign to the category of vice. Such love alone is the expression of the soul; and every student of love discovers sooner or later that the soul has its own intimate standard for judging what is wrong and what is right, and when that which was wrong has now become right for it to do.

Love, then, is Whitman's code. And when he seeks to call the youth of America away from selfishness and sin, he issues no new table of Thou-Shalt-Nots, but fills their ears with the words of their destiny, and of the meaning of America. For he knows that to sin is to choose a narrow and despicable delight, and that one must needs choose the nobler, larger joy when it becomes present and real. Hence he recalls all the aspirations that went to the birth of America, and describes the parts that women and men must fill if they are to be realised. He reminds his young readers of all the divine possibilities of manhood and of womanhood, and of how those possibilities are for them; and warns them that the body must necessarily affect the soul, for it is the medium through which the soul comes into consciousness.

Anticipate your own life—retract with merciless power,
Shirk nothing—retract in time—Do you see those errors, diseases, weaknesses, lies, thefts?
Do you see that lost character?—Do you see decay, consumption, rum-drinking, dropsy, fever, mortal cancer or inflammation?
Do you see death, and the approach of death?

Think of the Soul;
I swear to you that body of yours gives proportions to your Soul somehow to live in other spheres,
I do not know how, but I know it is so.[1]

Finally, in the new poems, Whitman makes more plain his attitude toward the woman question, as it is called. An American National Women's Rights Asso-

[1] *L. of G.* (1860), 172.

ciation had been founded in 1850, and although its agitation for the suffrage proved unsuccessful, the more general movement which it represented, especially the higher education of women, was gaining ground throughout America. The movement may be said to have been born in New York State, where Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Miss Susan B. Anthony were its most active leaders; but it owed much to Boston also, and notably to Margaret Fuller (Ossoli), whose tragic death had been an irreparable loss to the cause.[1]

Whitman was in cordial sympathy with everything that could forward the independence of women. But he disliked some outstanding characteristics of the movement. It was in part a violent reaction against the unwholesome sentimentalism of the past; a reaction which took the form of sexless intellectualism with a strong bent towards argumentation, perhaps the most abhorrent of all qualities to Whitman.

This movement for women's rights seemed to him too academic and too superficial; college education and the suffrage did not appeal to him. But he was not the less an enthusiast for the cause itself, as he understood it. His views are simple and clear. A soul is a soul, whether it be man's or woman's; and as such, it is of necessity free, and the equal of others. A woman is every way as good as a man. This truth must be made effective in all departments of life.

Then, taking up the thought which underlies the teaching of Plato, a woman is a citizen; and an American woman must be as independent, as dauntless, as greatly daring as a man. Such as the woman essentially is, such will be the man, her son, and her mate. But—and it is here he differs from the leaders of the movement—sex is basic not only in society but in personal life; and the woman unsexed is but half a woman.

Two poems in the new edition, the nucleus of the subsequent *Children of Adam*, are devoted to these ideas. In the first,[2] he describes the women of his ideal:—

[1] See esp. the *Life of Susan B. Anthony*. [2] *L. of G.*, 88.

They are not one jot less than I am,
They are tanned in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-possessed of themselves.

In the second,[1] he declares that life is only life after love—he means the passionate fulness of love—and indicates that womanhood is to be glorified not through a sexless revolt, but through the redemption of paternity. When the begetting of children is recognised to be as holy and as noble as the bearing of them, then the rights of women will be on the way to recognition.

If motherhood is the glory of the race, then a movement towards perpetual virginity brings no solution of our problem. The only solution lies in the independence of women, and in the evolution of a higher masculine ideal of the sex relation. The whole thing must be naturally and honestly faced. Until we so face it, we cannot understand a world in which it is so implicated, that sex is, as it were, a summing up of all things.

This last thought grew upon him, becoming more prominent in the next edition. In the present one it recurs in the open letter to Emerson printed in its appendix,[2] and gave a peculiar colour to the volume in the public eye. So much was this the case, that a prosecution seemed at one time imminent, many persons regarding the book as obscene. Among timid and conventional people, it seems to be established as a canon of criticism that it is always immoral to discuss immorality. They go but little farther who denounce the purity which is not defiled by pitch; or tear out by the roots all flowers that grow upon dung-heaps.

Such then, added to the old, formed the contents of the new edition of 1856. The appendix included Emerson's letter, which Whitman had been urged to publish, by Mr. C. A. Dana, editor of the *New York Sun*,

[1] *L. of G.*, 90. [2] *Ib.* (1856).

and a personal friend of Emerson.[1] He succeeded in convincing Whitman, who appears at first to have doubted the propriety of such an action. There is no evidence that Emerson resented the use thus made of his glowing testimony, although he would probably have modified his words had he written in acknowledgment of the enlarged volume. A sentence from the letter appeared also upon the back of the book: "I greet you at the commencement of a great career.—R. W. Emerson." This, together with the storm of indignation aroused by the absolutely frank language of the poems dealing with sex, gave the book notoriety and a rapid sale.

It is the least pleasing of the editions of *Leaves of Grass*, insignificant in appearance, and yet aggressive, by reason of that Emersonian testimonial. The open letter at the end, of which I have already spoken, is far from agreeable to read. It is careless, egotistical, naïve to a degree, and crowded with exaggerations. Addressing Emerson as master, it proceeds to denounce the churches as one vast lie, and the actual president as a rascal and a thief. It is so egregiously self-conscious that it makes the reader question for a moment whether all the egoism and naïveté of the preceding pages may not have been worn as a pose; but a moment's further consideration gives the question a final negative. Few men are without their hours of weakness; and that Whitman was not among those few, the letter is proof if such were needed.

The letter is not void of interest, since it records the rapid sale of the previous edition of a thousand copies, and anticipates that in a few more years the annual issue will be counted by thousands. This sanguine forecast explains the permanent and otherwise unreasonable disappointment of Whitman at the reception of his book.

It still made its appearance devoid of the usual adornment of a publisher's name upon the title-page.

[1] Bucke, 139.

Messrs. Fowler & Wells were again the principal agents, others being arranged with in the chief American cities, in London also, and Paris and Brussels. Plates were cast from the type, and a large sale was prepared for. But the New York agents soon withdrew, unwilling to face the storm of public opinion,[1] and perhaps the dangers of prosecution, and the book fell out of print when only a thousand copies had been issued.

The two ventures of 1855 and 1856 had brought Whitman little money, a mere handful of serious readers, and some notoriety. Though he did not give in, he began to look about him for some supplementary means of delivering his soul of its burden. His youthful success on the political platform, his love of crowds and of personal contact, his extraordinary popularity among the younger people, and his own keen sense of the power of oratory, turned his thoughts to lecturing.[2] He would follow the road which Emerson and Thoreau had taken. He would evangelise America with his gospel. Henceforward, as his mother said, he wrote barrels of lectures,[3] and at the same time he studied his new art more or less systematically. After his death a package of notes on Oratory, and the rough draft of a prospectus were found among his papers; the latter was headed, "15 cents. Walt Whitman's Lectures." It belongs to the year 1858.

By this time he had planned to write, print, distribute and recite throughout the United States and Canada a number of lectures—partly philosophical, partly socio-political, partly religious—with the object of creating what he conceived to be a new, and for the first time truly American attitude of mind. The lectures were ultimately to form a second volume of explanation and argument which would sustain the *Leaves*. He had now omitted any preface to the poems, the creative work standing alone. But having printed the second edition

[1] Burroughs, 19.
[2] Camden, vii.; viii., 244-260; ix., 200; x., 32. [3] *In re*, 35.

and thus relieved his mind of its most pressing burden, he recognised that the work of explanation and of criticism remained.

Moreover, he conceived that his lectures would quicken public interest in his book; while, by showing himself, he hoped to dispel some of the misapprehensions which concealed his real meaning from the popular mind. He alludes whimsically in this memorandum to the offensive practice of self-advertisement, of which he was not unconscious, remarking that "it cannot be helped," for it is the only way by which he can gain the ear of America, and bid her "Know thyself".

Finally, he proposed to earn his living in this manner. He would have preferred to give his services without fee, in the Quaker fashion; but for the time being at least, he must make a charge of ten dollars (two guineas) a lecture, and expenses, or an admission fee of one dime (about sixpence) a head.

The idea of lecturing was probably as old as the idea of the *Leaves of Grass;* he seems to have been considering it ever since he returned from the South. But now he formulated his ideas, which were of course those underlying the *Leaves*, and thought much and cogently on the style and manner of public speaking. His conclusions betray an ideal for oratory as individual and as mystical as that for the poet's art.

Whitman, the lecturer, is conceived as a prophet possessed by the tempestuous passion of inspiration. The orator is to combine the gifts of the great actor with the inspiration of the Pythoness and the spontaneity of the Quaker prophet. His gestures should be large, but reserved; the delivery deliberate, thought-awakening, elliptical, prophetic, wholly unlike that of the glib platform speakers of his day and our own. At first, erect and motionless, the speaker would impress his mere personality upon the assembly; then his eyes would kindle, like the eyes in that strange marble Balzac of Rodin's, and from the eyes outward the whole body would take fire and speak.

He conceived of oratory not as the delivery of some well-prepared address, but as the focussing of all the powers of thought and experience in an hour of inspiration and supreme mastery. He saw how much it entailed—what breadth of knowledge, what depth of thought, what perfect flexibility of voice and gesture trained to clear suggestion, what absolute purity of body, what perfect self-control. For, he would say to himself, the great orator is an artist as supreme as Alboni herself; his voice is to be as potent as hers, and his life must show an equal devotion to its purpose.

In this conception of the orator we have then a most interesting parallel with that of the poet. And just as Whitman the poet stands part way between the writer of prose and the singer in verse, including in himself some of the qualities of each, and adding an inspiration wholly his own, so Whitman the orator appears in this vision standing between the actor-singer and the lecturer or preacher, improvising great words.

The political aspect of his enterprise is suggested by a brief memorandum, dated in April, 1857,[1] wherein he notes that the "Champion of America" must keep himself clear of all official entanglements, devoting himself solely to the maintenance of a living interest in public questions throughout the length and breadth of the land. Standing aside from the parties with their clamorous cries, he must hold the public ear by nobler tones.

In another place[2] he writes that as Washington had freed the body politic of America from its dependence upon the English crown, so Whitman will free the American people from their dependence upon European ideals. The mere publication of such frank, but private assertions of Whitman's own faith in himself, will doubtless arouse a ready incredulity in the reader's mind. It might, perhaps, seem kinder to his memory to suppress them altogether; but upon second thought it will, I think, appear possible that he was a better judge than others of his own ability. His personality was one of

[1] Camden, ix., 7, 8. [2] *Ib.*, viii., 245.

extraordinary power, and his outlook of a breadth which was almost unique. And, as I have said, he felt himself to be an incarnation of the American spirit.

At the time, America was without leadership. Lincoln was still unseen; and Whitman was fully as capable of filling the highest office in the United States as several who have held it; while nothing in the circumstances or traditions of the White House made it absurd for any able citizen, of whatever rank, to entertain the thought of its tenancy. This would be especially true of a popular New Yorker, who made perhaps the best of all candidates for a Presidential campaign. The Republican party had but just been formed, and for the first time had fought an election. Thunderclouds of war were in the air, urged on by the ominous forces of slavery, and America was without a champion.

I think the idea of political leadership crossed Whitman's mind at this time, and that he put it definitely aside. The hour cried out for the man, and the cry was not to go unanswered; but with all his power and all his goodwill and fervour, Whitman became slowly convinced that it was not to be he. He had seen too much of party manœuvres, and had too vigorous a love of personal liberty, to contend for office. But he did covet the power of a prophet to stir the heart of America, and appeal to her people everywhere in her name. He never gave up the idea of lecturing or lost his interest in oratory; but the lectures he planned, the course on Democracy and the rest, remained undelivered. It is as though he had prepared himself and stood awaiting a call which never came.

Instead, he turned once more to add new poems to his collection. A hint in explanation is to be found in a poem written about this time,[1] in which he tells how, having first sought knowledge, he then determined to live for America and become her orator; he was afterwards possessed by the desire for a heroic life of action, but was given the commission of song. Finally, another

[1] *L. of G.* (1860), 354.

change came over his spirit; the claims of his own life seized him; he could not escape from the passion of comradeship which overwhelmed him and wholly absorbed his thought.[1] We shall consider this phase in the next chapter, but before doing so, it will be well to recall the political events of the hour and the circumstances surrounding the advent of a new power and personality into American life.

[1] As the poem is not given in the complete *L. of G.* I reprint it here:—

Long I thought that knowledge alone would suffice me—O if I could but obtain knowledge!
Then my lands engrossed me—Lands of the prairies, Ohio's land, the southern savannas, engrossed me—For them I would live—I would be their orator;
Then I met the examples of old and new heroes—I heard of warriors, sailors, and all dauntless persons—And it seemed to me that I too had it in me to be as dauntless as any—and would be so;
And then, to enclose all, it came to me to strike up the songs of the New World—And then I believed my life must be spent in singing;
But now take notice, land of the prairies, land of the south savannas, Ohio's land,
Take notice, you Kanuck woods—and you Lake Huron—and all that with you roll toward Niagara—and you Niagara also,
And you, Californian mountains—That you each and all find somebody else to be your singer of songs,
For I can be your singer of songs no longer—One who loves me is jealous of me, and withdraws me from all but love,
With the rest I dispense—I sever from what I thought would suffice me, for it does not—it is now empty and tasteless to me,
I heed knowledge, and the grandeur of The States, and the example of heroes, no more,
I am indifferent to my own songs—I will go with him I love,
It is to be enough for us that we are together—We never separate again.

CHAPTER IX

"YEAR OF METEORS"

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the man for whom the hour cried out, was not quite unknown to fame.[1] Ten years older than Whitman, and like Whitman owning to a strain of Quaker blood in his veins, he belonged by origin to the South and by adoption to the West. After six years' service in the Illinois Legislature, and a term in the Lower House at Washington, he settled down at the age of forty to his profession as a country lawyer.

In 1854 the repeal of the Missouri compromise in favour of "squatter sovereignty" recalled him to political life, and he became the champion of Free-soil principles in his State, against the chief sponsor of the opposing doctrine, the "little giant of Illinois," Judge Stephen Douglas. His reply to Douglas in October of that year was read and applauded by his party throughout America.

Hitherto he had been a Whig, and during Clay's lifetime, his devoted follower, but the repeal of the compromise was followed in 1856 by the formation of a new party, and Lincoln and Whitman both became "black republicans". "Barnburners," Abolitionists and "Anti-Nebraska" men—those that is to say who opposed the application of the doctrine of "squatter sovereignty" to Nebraska and Kansas—had united to form a new Free-soil party. They nominated J. C. Frémont, the gallant Californian "Path-finder" for the Presidency; but, owing to the presence of a third candidate put forward

[1] *Cf.* useful ed. of his speeches recently added to "Unit Library".

by the Know-nothing Whigs—whose only policy seems to have been a "patriotic" hatred of all Catholics and foreigners—the Democratic nominee was elected for the last time in a generation. After his four years were out, a succession of Republican Presidents occupied the White House for twenty-four years.

James Buchanan, who defeated Frémont—becoming like Lincoln, his successor, a minority President—seems to have been an honourable and well-intentioned Pennsylvanian, but he was a man whose character was quite insufficient for his new office. As an injudicious, short-sighted diplomatist, he had already, when minister at St. James's in the days of President Pierce, commended his intrigues for the annexation of Cuba.

Earlier in 1856 Chief Justice Taney, of the Supreme Court, had delivered his notorious decision in the Dred Scott case; laying it down that Congress could not forbid a citizen to carry his property into the public domain —that is to say, it could not prohibit slavery in the territories—and that, in the political sense of the word, a negro was not a "man," but only property. This decision and the bloody scenes enacted in Kansas, where settlers from the North and South were met to struggle for the constitution which should make the new State either slave or free, greatly exasperated public opinion, and called forth, among others, the protests of Abraham Lincoln.

In 1858, while Whitman was studying oratory, Lincoln was stumping Illinois, in those ever-memorable debates which laid bare all the plots and purposes of the Southern politicians. When the votes in that contest were counted, Lincoln held an actual majority; but Douglas was returned as Senator by a majority of the electoral votes. Though thus defeated, Lincoln was no longer hidden in a Western obscurity. He was a man with a future; and America had half-unconsciously recognised him.

Towards the close of 1859, the fire which had been kindled in Kansas flashed out suddenly in Virginia.

America was startled by the news of John Brown's raid, and the capture of the arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

Brown was among the most remarkable personalities of the time; and while some saw in him a religious fanatic of the Roundhead type, who compelled his enemies to pray at the muzzle of his musket, and who for the Abolition cause would shatter the Union; others counted him a martyr for the cause of freedom. Emerson had been one of his most earnest backers when first he went to Kansas; and now his deed fired the enthusiasm of New England. Thoreau wrote: "No man in America has ever stood up so persistently and effectively for the dignity of human nature, knowing himself for a man, and the equal of any Government"; and when he was hung, it was Thoreau who vehemently declared that John Brown seemed to him to be the only man in America who had not died.[1] His high spirit quickened the conscience of the North, and two years later its sons marched into Virginia singing the song of his apotheosis.

Whitman was present at the trial of certain of Brown's abettors in the State House at Boston;[2] one of a group prepared to effect their rescue in the event of a miscarriage of justice. Lincoln, on the other hand, was of those who, in spite of their intense hatred of slavery, wholly disapproved the Raid. For him, John Brown was a maddened enthusiast, a mere assassin like Orsini.[3] His attempt to raise the slaves of Virginia in revolt against the whites was abhorrent to the Republican statesman whose knowledge of the South showed him the horrors of a negro rising. Regarding slavery as the irreconcilable and only dangerous foe of the Republic, Lincoln held that the Federal Government must restrain it within its actual bounds; and that the sentiment in favour of gradual emancipation advocated by Jefferson, the father of the Democratic party, should be encouraged in the States of the South. But it was the States themselves that held and must hold the fatal

[1] Thoreau's *A Plea for Captain J. B.*, and *The Last Days of J. B.*
[2] Kennedy, 49. [3] Address at Cooper Inst., 27th February, 1860.

right of choice; it was for them, not for America, to liberate their slaves.

While the figure of Lincoln was thus becoming more and more visible to the nation, Whitman was fulfilling his own destiny in New York. He was born to be a leader of men; but a poet, a path-finder, a pioneer, not a politician or president. Whatever his noble ambition might urge, or his quick imagination prompt, he kept his feet to the path of his proper destiny.

He had a prodigiously wide circle of friends, gathered from every walk of life: journalists and literary men of all kinds; actors and actresses; doctors and an occasional minister of religion; political and public characters; the stage-drivers and the hands on the river-boats; farmers from the country; pilots and captains of the port; labourers, mechanics and artisans of every trade; loungers too, and many a member of that class which society has failed to assimilate and which it hunts from prison to asylum and poor-house; and he had acquaintances among another class of outcasts whose numbers were already an open menace to the life of the Western metropolis, the girls who sell themselves upon the streets.[1]

Many anecdotes are told of him during these years: how for instance he would steer the ferry-boats, till once he brought his vessel into imminent peril, and never thereafter would consent to handle the wheel; or how, during the illness of a comrade, he held his post, driving his stage in the winter weather while he lay in the wards of the hospital; or again, how he took Emerson to a favourite rendezvous of firemen and teamsters, his good friends, and to the astonishment of the kindly sage, proved himself manifestly one of them.

A doctor at the old New York Hospital,[2] a dark stone building surmounted by a cupola, and looking out over a grassy square through iron gates upon Pearl Street,

[1] Among the MSS. Traubel is a first draft for a novel (?) dealing with a woman of this class.

[2] Dr. D. B. St. J. Roosa in *N.Y. Mail and Express.*

often met him in the wards, where he came to visit one or other of his driver friends, and enjoyed the restful influence of his presence there or in the little house-doctor's room. In those days, when Broadway was crammed with vehicles and with stages of all colours, much as is the Strand to-day, the proverbial American daring and recklessness gave ample opportunity for accidents. As to the drivers, they were generally country-bred farmers' sons, fine fellows, wide-awake and thoroughly conversant with all that passed in the city from the earliest grey of dawn till midnight: and Whitman found some of his closest comrades in their ranks.

Sometimes a member of the hospital staff would go over with him to Pfaff's German restaurant or Rath-skeller on Broadway; a large dingy basement to which one descended from the street. Here, half under the pavement, were the tables, bar and oyster stall, whereat the Bohemians of New York were wont to gather, and in a yellow fog of tobacco-smoke denounce all things Bostonian. John Swinton, a friend of Alcott and of Whitman, belonged to the group,[1] and among those who drank Herr Pfaff's lager-beer, and demolished his schwartz brod, Swiss cheese, and Frankfurter wurst, were many of the brilliant little band which at this time was making the *New York Saturday Press* a challenge to everything academic and respectable.

It was here that a young Bostonian, paying his first visit to the city in 1860,[2] found Whitman installed at the head of a long table, already a hero in that revolutionary young world. The *Press* was his champion, and his voice was not to be silenced. Mr. Howells, for it was he, had been amused and amazed at the ferociously profane Bohemianism of the worthy editor, who had lived in Paris, and now worshipped it in the person of Victor Hugo as much as he detested Longfellow and Boston.

Mr. Howells was astonished and deeply impressed by

[1] Donaldson, 208. [2] W. D. Howells, *Lity. Friends and Acq.*, 74.

the extraordinary charm, gentleness and benignity of the man whom the *Press* was extolling as arch-anarch and rebel. Whitman's eyes and voice made a frank and irresistible proffer of friendship, and he gave you his hand as though it were yours to keep. An atmosphere of unmistakable purity emanated from him in the midst of that thickness of smoke, that reek of beer and oysters and German cooking. He was clean as the sea is clean. He passed along the ordinary levels of life as one who lives among the mountains, and finds his home on Helicon or Olympus.

Ada Clare[1] (Mrs. Julia Macelhinney), by all accounts a charming and brilliant woman, was queen of this rebel circle, and especially a friend of Whitman's. News of her tragic death from hydrophobia, caused by the bite of her pet dog, came as a terrible shock to all who had known her. He had other women friends, notably Mrs. "Abby" Price, of Brooklyn, and her two daughters.[2] The mother was an incurable lover of her kind, whose hospitality to the outcast survived all the frauds practised upon it.

The haunted faces of the needy were becoming only too familiar both in New York and Brooklyn. The winter of 1857-58 had been a black one:[3] banks had broken, and work had come to a standstill; and there had been in consequence the direst need among the ever-increasing class of men who were wholly dependent upon their weekly earnings. The rise of this class in a new country marks the advent of the social problem in its more acute form: and from this date on there was a rapid development of the usual palliative agencies, missions, rescue-homes and what-not. The permanent problem of poverty had made its appearance in America.

It need hardly be added that at the same time there were many evidences of the growing wealth of another class of the citizens, those whose profits were derived from land-values and the employment of wage-labour. The brown-stone characteristic of the modern city was now

[1] Kennedy, 70. [2] Bucke, 26, 38. [3] *Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, iii., 458-60.

replacing the wood and brick which had hitherto lined Broadway,[1] as private houses gave way to shops and offices, hotels and theatres. Residences were built farther and farther up-town; and the Quarantine Station on Staten Island, which stood in the way of a similar expansion in that desirable quarter, was burned out by aspiring citizens. And meanwhile the pressure of life in the East-side rookeries was growing more and more tyrannous.

The foundering of a slave-ship off Montauk Point was one of the more striking reminders of the menace of vested interests to all that the fathers of the Republic had held dear.[2] For even the slave trade was now being revived, and the hands of Northern merchants were anything but clean from the gold of conspiracy. Sympathy for the "institution" and its corollaries was strong in New York, and was not unrepresented at Pfaff's. It must have been about the close of 1861,[3] or a little later, that one of the Bohemians proposed a toast to the success of the Southern arms. Whitman retorted with indignant and passionate words: an altercation ensued across the table, with some show of ill-mannered violence by the Southern enthusiast; and Whitman left his old haunt, never to return till the great storm of the war had become a far-away echo.

There are two portraits which belong to the Pfaffian days. In either he might be the stage-driver of Broadway, and his dress presents a striking contrast with the stiff gentility of the orthodox costume, the silk hat and broadcloth, of the correct citizen. He is a great nonchalant fellow, with rough clothes fit for manual toil; a coat whose collar, by the way, has a rebellious upward turn; a waistcoat, all unbuttoned save at a point about half-way down, exposing the loose-collared shirt surrounded by a big knotted tie. The trousers are of the same striped stuff as the vest; one hand is thrust into a pocket, the other holds his broad brim.

In the photograph, which alone is of full length, the

[1] *Cf. Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, iii., 464, etc. [2] *Ib.*, iii., 468. [3] Kennedy, 69.

WHITMAN AT FORTY

face is strong and kindly, as Mr. Howells saw it; but in the painting, which dates from 1859,[1] and is valuable as showing the florid colouring of the man at this time —the growth of hair and beard, though touched with grey, very vigorous and still dark, the eyebrows almost black, the face handsome, red and full as of an old-time sea-captain—the aspect is heavy and even a little sinister. Probably this is a clumsy rendering of that lethargic and brooding condition which the occupation of sitting for a portrait would be likely to induce; and in this it is curiously unlike that of the photograph.

The pose in the latter is unstudied and a little awkward; one cannot help feeling that the man ought to loaf a little less. The head is magnificent, but the knees are loose. There was something in Whitman's character which this full-length portrait indicates better than any other; something indefinite and complacent, which matched with his deliberate and swaggery gait. It is a quality which exasperates the formalists, and all the people who feel positively indecent in anything but a starched shirt.

Whitman wore the garb and fell naturally into the attitudes of the manual worker. When he was not at work he was relaxed, and stood at ease in a way that no one could mistake. And when he went out to enjoy himself he never donned a tail-coat and patent shoes. Something in this very capacity for relaxation and looseness at the knees made him more companionable to the average man, as it made him more exasperating to the superior person. The gentility of the clerical mannikin of the office was utterly abominable to him; so much one can read in the portrait, and in the fact that he persisted in calling himself Walt, the name which was familiar to the men on the ferry and the road.[2]

Early in 1860 Whitman made arrangements with a firm of young and enterprising Boston publishers for

[1] In possession of Mr. J. H. Johnston, of New York. Reproduced as frontispiece to *Comp. Prose.*

[2] Kennedy, 44; Bucke, 33; Burroughs, 20, 21.

the issue of a third edition of his book. It had now been out of print for nearly three years, and new material had all that time been accumulating, amounting to about two-thirds of what had already been published.

He went over to Boston and installed himself in a little room at the printing office, where he spent his days carefully correcting and revising the proofs. A friend who found him there speaks of his very quiet manners.[1] He rarely laughed, and never loudly. He seemed to be provokingly indifferent to the impression he was creating, and made no effort to talk brilliantly. He was indeed quite bare of the small change of conversation, and gave no impression of self-consciousness. At the time of this interview he was accompanied by a sickly listless lad whom he had found at the boarding-house where he stayed. Whitman had compassion on him and carried him along, in order that he might communicate something of his own superabundant vitality to him.

During his stay in Boston, Walt frequently attended the services then conducted at the Seamen's Bethel by Father Taylor.[2] As a rule, he avoided churches of every sort, feeling acutely the ineffectiveness of what is grimly called "Divine Service," feeling also that worship was for the soul in its solitude.[3] Not that he was ignorant of that social passion which finds its altar in communion of spirit, or was blind to the deepest mysteries of fellowship. To these, as we shall see, he was particularly sensitive. But the formalities of a church must have seemed foolish and irksome to one for whom all fellowship was a kind of worship, and all desire was a prayer. In the preaching of Father Taylor there was nothing formal or ineffective. In it Walt felt anew the passionate sense of reality which had thrilled him as a child in the preaching of old Elias Hicks.

Father Taylor was now nearly seventy;[4] a southerner by birth, he had been a sailor, and became upon conver-

[1] Mr. Trowbridge. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 385-87. [3] *Ib.*, 226, 227.
[4] *Father Taylor, the Sailor Preacher*, by G. Haven and T. Russell, 1877.

ion a "shouting Methodist". The earnestness of his rst devotion remained with him to the last; and his rayers were especially marked by the power which owed from him continually. Behind the high pulpit the quaint heavily-timbered, wood-scented chapel was painted a ship in distress, in vivid illustration of is words which were ever returning to the sea. All is ways were eloquent, unconventional, picturesque nd homely like his face, so that he won the hearts of ll conditions of men, and became one of the idols of Boston.

The old man's power of fascination seemed almost errible to his hearers; one young sailor opined that he must be the actual Holy Ghost. Walt himself was lways moved to tears by the marvellous intimacy of is passionate pleading in prayer.[1] He spoke straight o the Soul, and not at all, as do common preachers, to he intelligence or the superficial emotions; and the Soul f his hearers answered, with the awful promptitude of n unknown living presence within. His passion of love was at once tender and remorseless; Whitman compares im with a surgeon operating upon a beloved patient.

In this man, before whom all the elocution of the latform was mere trickery, Walt recognised the one essentially perfect orator" whom he had ever heard, he only one who fulfilled the demands of his own ideal. And be it remembered, Theodore Parker was in his ower in those days, while Father Taylor was an vangelical of the old school. It is, after all, not mysicism but orthodoxy which is exclusive; and though he was wholly a heretic, Whitman was able fully to love nd appreciate those who were farthest removed from nis own point of view.

Upon this visit Emerson and Whitman saw much of one another. They were both men in middle life—Emerson had passed his fiftieth year—and each entertained for the other a feeling of warm and affectionate

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 386.

regard. Whitman felt toward the older man almost a
to an elder brother,[1] and the sweet and wise and kindl
spirit of Emerson frequently sought out the younge
in brotherly solicitude for his welfare.

Their intimacy had sprung from Emerson's letter
and it was always Emerson who pressed it. Some
thing in the mental atmosphere in which the Concor
philosopher moved was very repellant to Whitman: h
positively disliked "a literary circle," and blamed it fo
all the real or imagined shortcomings of his friend. H
himself would not go to Concord from his horror of an
sort of lionizing.

So when Emerson wanted to talk, they would walk to
gether on the Common;[2] as on one memorable, brigh
keen February day, when under the bare branches o
the American elms, they paced to and fro discoursing
earnestly.

Emerson's name had been somewhat too conspicuously
displayed on the back of the second edition, of which he
had been caused to appear almost as a sponsor; and
some of the lines thus introduced had put his Puritan
friends completely out of countenance, while giving his
many enemies an admirable opportunity to blasphem
The frank celebration of acts to which modern society
only alludes by indirection, revealed to the observant
eye of orthodoxy that cloven hoof of immorality which
it always suspects concealed about the person of the
philosophic heretic. And we can well imagine the con-
sternation of the blameless householder of Boston as, in
the bosom of his astonished family, he read aloud the
pages commended to him by the words of the master.

It was thus upon Emerson, who did not quite approve
the offending poems, that much of the storm of indig-
nation wreaked itself; and whatever Emerson himself
might think of the situation, his family was indignant.
One can almost hear them arguing that a man has
heresies enough of his own to close the ears of men t

[1] Kennedy, 76, 77; *cf. Comp. Prose*, 315-17; Burroughs (*a*), 67, etc.
[2] Burroughs, 144.

his message, without gratuitous implication in heresies which are not his; if he value his charge, let him keep clear of other men's eccentricities; he really has no right to allow himself to be represented as the sponsor for such sentiments as Whitman printed in the *Body Electric*.[1]

But whatever his friends might counsel, Emerson spoke from his own heart and wisdom that February day. He was pleading not for himself, but for the truth as he saw it, and for his offending friend. It was not because the book was being published as it were in his own diocese, his own beloved Boston; but because the new edition would be the first to be issued by a responsible house, and destined, probably, to enjoy a wide and permanent circulation, remaining for years the final utterance of Whitman upon these matters, that Emerson was so urgent and so eloquent.

His position was a strong one; his arguments, and the spirit which prompted them, were, as Whitman admitted, overwhelming, and his companion was in a sense convinced. It is much to be regretted that neither of the friends kept any detailed record of this discussion, but I think we can guess what the older man's position would be.

Your message of the soul, we can imagine Emerson saying, is of the utmost importance to America: it is what America needs, and it is what you, and you alone, can make her hear. But you can only make her hear it, if you state it in the most convincing and simple way.

Now these poems of yours upon sex complicate and confuse the real message, not because they are necessarily wrong in themselves—I do not say they are—but because they do and must give rise to misunderstanding, and in consequence, obscure or even cancel the rest. They give the book an evil notoriety, and will create for it a *succès de scandale*. It will be bought and read by the prurient, to whom its worth will be wholly sealed.

And not only do you destroy the value of the book

[1] *L. of G.*, 81.

by printing such poems as these, you render it actually dangerous. Personally you and I are agreed—he would say—with Boehme where he writes that "the new spirit cometh to Divine vision in himself, and heareth God's word, and hath Divine understanding and inclination . . . and . . . *the earthly flesh . . . hurteth him not at all*".[1] We know the flesh to be beautiful and sacred; we turn with loathing from the blasphemies of Saint Bernard and of Luther, who saw in it nothing but a maggot-sack, a sack of dung. On these things we are at one; but how are we most wisely and surely to direct others on the road to self-realisation?

To feed the monster of a crude passion is surely not the way to bring the individual toward the Divine vision. To be frank about these matters is necessary; but in order to be honest is it necessary to fling abroad this wildfire, against which we are all contending, lest it destroy the labours of ages? Must we nourish this giant, whose unruly strength is for ever threatening to tear in pieces the unity of the self?

By these poems you are deliberately consigning your book to the class which every wise parent must label "dangerous to young people," and which the very spirits you most desire to kindle for America will be compelled, by the law of their being, to handle at their peril, and to turn from with distress.

Arguments not unlike these were doubtless used by Emerson, for we know that he discussed this problem; and Whitman listened attentively to them, explaining himself at times, but generally weighing them in silence. Perhaps they were not new to him, but they were rendered the more powerful and well-nigh irresistible by the persuasive and beautiful spirit, the whole magnetic personality of his friend.

Walt was deeply moved, and when, after a couple of hours, Emerson concluded the statement of his case with the challenge, "What have you to say to such

[1] *Two Theosophical Letters*, ii., 11.

things?" could but reply, "Only that while I can't answer them at all, I feel more settled than ever to adhere to my own theory and exemplify it". "Very well," responded Emerson cheerfully, "then let us go to dinner."[1]

They had been pacing up and down the Long Walk by Beacon Street, from which one looks across the broad, park-like stretch of the Common—that Common whose grey, bright-eyed squirrels are so confiding, and whose air is so good from the sea. To-day the oldest of the elms, that kept record of the past as wisely as any archives, have yielded to the winds and to the tooth of time. The growth of these trees is very different from that of our English species, and their long, curving branches rib the vault of sky overhead. The two men went over the historic hill—where now the gilded dome of the State House glows richly against the sky—descending through picturesquely narrow streets, full of memories and echoes of old days, to their destination at the American House.

[1] Bucke, 144, 145; *Comp. Prose*, 184.

CHAPTER X

THE TESTAMENT OF A COMRADE

WHAT the theory was from which even Emerson's eloquence could not persuade Whitman, we may understand better if we take up the new volume, turning the pages which were now being added to it, till toward the end we come upon the matter of debate.

Though handsomer and pleasanter to handle than its predecessor, this Boston edition still wears a countryman's dress ; a heavily stamped orange cover which threatens the symmetry of any library shelf. Evidently, Whitman did not intend it to lie there in peace. It was to be different from the rest, and bad company for them.

It opens on a reproduction of the 1859 painting, which faces an odd-looking lithographed and beflourished title-page. The old Preface has gone for good, and now its place is taken by a *Proto-Leaf* or Summary, by way of introduction.[1]

The first edition had been a manifesto of the American idea in literature and ethics, and a declaration of the gospel of Self-realisation. The second expanded the mystical meanings involved in this ; " think of the soul " running through all, and breaking out continually as a refrain, and it made clearer the message to women already more than hinted in the first. Now in the third edition, emphasis falls upon the personal note, which becomes strangely haunting. The book is not only for the first time a complete and living whole ; it is

[1] *L. of G.*, 18.

a presence, a lover, a comrade, and its close is like a death.

Solitary, singing in the West, says the introductory Leaf,[1] the poet is striking up for a New World; and lo, he beholds all the peoples of all time as his interminable audience. For through him, Nature herself speaks without restraint; and through him, the Soul, the ultimate Reality.

He sings for America; for there at last the Soul is acknowledged; and his song will bind her together. The Body, Sex, Comradeship, these he sings: but above all, Faith, for he is proclaiming a new religion which includes all others and is worthy of America.[2] Of whatever he may seem to write, he is always writing of Religion; for indeed she is supreme. Love, Democracy, Religion—these three—and the greatest of these is Religion.

The world is unseen as much as seen. The air is full of invisible presences as real as the seen. And his songs also are for those as yet unseen, his children by Democracy, the woman of his love. For them he will reveal the soul, glorious in the body.

Ah, what a glory is this our life, and this our country! Death itself will not carry him away from it. In these fields, men and women in the years to come will ever be discovering him, and he will render them worthy of America as none other can. For he has "arrived," he is no longer mortal.

If you would behold America, seek her in these pages. And if you would triumph and make her triumphant, you must become his comrade. The final note is one of passionate love-longing for comradeship.[3]

Such is the summary of the book; but it cannot be so briefly dismissed by us, for it is full of suggestions of the inner workings of Whitman's mind at this period, for us, in some respects, the most characteristic and important of all. For after it there comes the war, the

[1] *L. of G.*, 19. [2] *Ib.*, 23. [3] *Ib.*, 29; (1860), 22.

watershed of his life; there he employed and in a sense expended all the resources of his manhood, to issue from it upon the slopes of ill-health which lead down into the valley of the shadow. But here he is in his prime, and on the heights.

Here also, his individuality shows most definitely, even in its secondary qualities. The association with men of a somewhat less Bohemian type than were many of his literary friends in New York, and the more cosmopolitan atmosphere of the national capital, together with the close intimacy with death which the war-hospitals afforded, somewhat quieted the tone of later editions. Here there is more of the naïve colloquialism and mannerism, the slang and the ejaculations of "the arrogant Mannhattanese" which he loves to proclaim himself.[1] It is the edition which is most dear to many an enthusiast, and most exasperating to many a critic.

After the first-written and longest of all the poems, "The Song of Myself," here called "Walt Whitman," there follow two large bundles, tied together and labelled respectively "Chants Democratic" and "Leaves of Grass". The bulk of these consists of material already familiar.

But number four of the Chants,[2] celebrating the organic unity of America, is new, and may be quoted as a curious example of Whitman's style. Here are seven pages of soliloquy practically innocent of a period, flowing along together in a hardly vertebrate sentence, which enumerates the different elements included in the Union. Strange as it certainly looks, this creation must have been so constructed of set purpose, for Whitman could not be ignorant of the oddity of its appearance, when viewed by the ever-alert humour of the already hostile American critic. Can there possibly be any connection between this style of composition and the larger consciousness of which he had experience? The question

[1] In this edition the old-fashioned, colloquial "you was" is retained.
[2] *L. of G.*, 138.

may appear absurd, but I ask it in all seriousness, and would propose an affirmative answer.

Whitman regarded his whole book as a unit, not as a collection. Like the composer who elaborates a single theme into a long-sustained symphony, or the psychological novelist who requires three volumes for the portrayal of a personality, he held his meaning suspended in order that it might be more fully grasped; and this is true also of his individual poems. The thought he had to convey was not epigrammatic, but a complex of suggestions which merge into one as they are read together. I would even venture to suggest that some of these exercises in sustained meaning were also designed to train the faculty of apprehending the Many-in-One, the Unity, which, as he believed, lies behind all variety. In considering this suggestion one may contrast the emotional results produced by epigrams and long sentences. May not the former be the natural rhythm for wit and the latter for imagination?

The contrast between the essayist on "Man" and the singer of "Myself" is obvious;[1] but the optimism of the eighteenth century epigrammatist seems to be echoed in Whitman's pages.[2] On the verge of war, and in the midst of all the corruption of American politics, he has the audacity to declare and reiterate, "Whatever is, is best". Are we to dismiss it as the shallow utterance of a callous-hearted, healthy-bodied, complacent American, deliberately blind to the world's tragedy? A thousand times, no. The pages before and after such declarations are filled with knowledge of suffering and death, of the bereavement of love, of the shame that follows sin, and of the desire for a better day. But here and elsewhere, he sees the perfect plan of the ages being fulfilled. From his Pisgah-height, he beholds the stretch of time; and looking out over creation as did the Divine Eye, he, Walt Whitman, beholds that it is all good.

Emerson has written of "the Perfect Whole"; but in the pages before us Whitman specifies the parts, seeing

[1] See *infra*, 289. [2] *L. of G.*, 191.

them all illumined by the mystic light of the soul. This lays him open to attack; it is even dangerous from the point of view of morality. Whitman acknowledges as much, but he still has faith in his vision; he is still obedient to the inner impulse which for him at least, is indubitably divine. There must always be a point at which the moralist would fain part company from the mystic: one is occupied in the fields of eternity, while the other is pre-occupied upon the battlefield of time. There is room for both in a world where time and eternity alike are real, but the toil of the seer must not be made subservient to that of the warrior.

Some of the lines of Whitman's "Hymn to the Setting Sun" recall the canticle which Brother Francis used to sing among the olives:

> Open mouth of my Soul, uttering gladness,
> Eyes of my Soul, seeing perfection,
> Natural life of me, faithfully praising things,
> Corroborating for ever the triumph of things—[1]

and it is all pregnant with the wonder of being. In this it is like his earlier work, but it has added deeper notes to its melody, and has won therewith a finer rhythm. A mellow glory of the setting sun irradiates it. All space, the poet reminds us, is filled with soul-life, and the strong chords of that life awake the rhythms of his praise for the joy of the Universal Being.

He greets death with equanimity, and it is this bell-note of welcome to death which gives the full bass to the first Boston edition. America, these poems and their writer, and all the struggling creatures of life, are to find their meaning in death, in transition; they are to slough off what is no longer theirs and pass forward into life. Are they then to lose individual identity? No, the soul is identity, and they are of the soul; but that in them which is not the soul will find its meaning in death. There is a spiritual body, which the soul has gathered about itself through the agency of the senses, and that body the soul retains; but the body of the

[1] *L. of G.*, 374.

senses dissolves and finds new uses and new meanings, through death.

We may illustrate this thought from the life of the whole tree, which is enriched by the life of every leaf. When the sap withdraws from the leaf, and the leaf shrivels and dies, and the frost and wind carry its corpse away and mix it with the mire, the soul of the leaf still lives in the tree. But the mere outer body, which did but temporarily belong to the life of the leaf, finds new value by its destruction and death. Who has not felt the liberating joy of the autumn gales? Who has not rejoiced among the trees, feeling with them the sense of rest and quiescence in which the force of life accumulates anew for expression and growth? But for the fallen leaves also we may rejoice, since their atoms have won something by contact with the life of the tree which now they can communicate to the humble mire.

In another of these poems,[1] Whitman compares himself with the historian. The latter studies the surface of humanity, while in the former the inner self of the race finds expression. Such is the difference between an historian and a prophet. In another,[2] carrying forward a kindred thought, he declares that he has discovered the story of the past, not in books but in the actual present. To the seer, as to God, the past is not gone by, but is clearly legible in the pages of our current life, if only we would learn to read them. It is hidden from our normal consciousness; but in certain phases of consciousness to which, it would appear, Whitman attained, it is revealed.

To this deeper consciousness Whitman looked for the fulfilling of his own work and the integration of all knowledge in the future. As men shall enter into it, he believed, their work will show the clear evidence of an underlying unity;[3] it will cease to be fragmentary, and our libraries, instead of being mere museums filled with specimens, will become organic like a tree. Then the sense of the cosmos will superintend all things that man

[1] *L. of G.*, 11; (1860), 181. [2] *Ib.*, 300. [3] *Ib.*, 299.

makes, as it superintends all the works of nature. A unity already exists, but an unconscious unity, like that of chaos.[1] His own work is, of course, only a part; a prelude to the universal hymn which later poets will raise together. But it is a prelude, and this distinguishes it from other contemporary verse.

America, the land of the Many-in-One, he had discovered as the field for the new poetry.[2] For the divine unity is a living complex of variety. Every heart has its own song, and yet the heart of all song is one. Henceforward, he will go up and down America like the sun, awakening the new seasons of the soul. Some of his songs are especially for New York, others for the West, the Centre or the South. But everywhere and to all alike, they cry the messages of Reality, Equality, Immortality. Neither do they cry only, but they actually create. For song, he says, is no mere sound upon the wind, born but to die; these songs of his are the most real of realities; they will outlast centuries, supporting the Democracy of the world.[3]

The section which is specifically entitled *Leaves of Grass* opens upon a note of that humility in which Whitman is supposed to have failed. Throwing wholly aside his egoism and pride, he identifies himself with tiny and ephemeral things—the scum and weed which the sea flings upon Paumanok's coast.

"As I Ebbed with the Ocean of Life"[4] is a most significant poem, which it is impossible to summarise briefly. It appears to have been suggested by the experiences of an autumn evening on the Long Island beach, perhaps upon the then lonely sands of Coney Island; an evening in which the divine pride of conscious power and manhood, from which as a rule he wrote in the exaltation of inspiration, ebbed away, and left him struggling with the power of what he calls the electric or eternal self, striving as it were against it to retain his own individual consciousness.

[1] *L. of G.*, 18. [2] *Ib.* (1860), 190. [3] *Ib.* (1860), 193. [4] *Ib.*, 202.

Although it is not easy to explain what he means, the passage admirably suggests the complex inner experience of his life at this period. It was filled with battles and adventures of the spirit, and it kept his mind always supplied with ample material for thought. It is no wonder that the endeavour to explain himself, and to keep some kind of record of these explorations and discoveries in the Unknown occupied much of his time, and that these years are somewhat barren of outward incident. The inner experiences of so sane and stalwart a man are of the utmost psychological interest, and we cannot lay too much stress upon their importance in Whitman's story, proving as they do the delicate nervous organisation of the man.

As the struggle proceeds, Walt seems to be seized by a strange new feeling. He is fascinated by the tiny wind-rows left by the tide upon the sand, and the sense of a likeness between himself and them arises in him, taking the form not so much of a thought as of a consciousness of kinship. The ocean scum and débris reminds him how near to him is the infinite ocean of life and death, and how he himself is but a little washed-up drift, soon to be swallowed in the approaching waters. Doubt overwhelms him; he seems to know nothing of all that he thought he knew; his Soul and Nature make mock at him. He admits that he is but as this tiny nothing.

This mood is a real one in Whitman. It is wrong to think of him as a man who was always complacent and cock-sure; all heroic faith must have its moments of doubt, its crisis of despair, its cry of abandonment upon the cross.

But they are moments only. If he is but this sea-drift, yet he claims the shore as his father: "I take what is underfoot: what is yours, is mine, my father". So he takes hold upon the Eternal Reality and communes with it, praying that his lips may be touched and utter the great mysteries; for otherwise, these will overwhelm his being.[1] Pride, the full tide of life, will

[1] *L. of G.* (1860), 198.

soon flow again in our veins; but after all, what are we but a strange complex of sea-drift and changing moods strewed here at your feet? It is not pessimism but humility which asks that question, the humility which is part of a divine pride.

That pride refuses to blink anything; let us face it all, even to the utmost, he keeps saying. He feels that the soul can and must face all.[1] He has not to make a theory or to justify himself, to uphold institutions, or inculcate moralities; he has to open the doors of life in faith. He has to let light in at all the windows. And if it illumines ugliness as well as beauty, sin and shame as well as virtue and pride—still it is his part to let in the ever-glorious light. The more the light shines in, the more the Soul is satisfied. In himself he recognises sin and baseness and gives it expression, bringing it to the light.

(O admirers! praise not me! compliment not me! you make me wince,
I see what you do not—I know what you do not;)
Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and choked,
Beneath this face that appears so impassive, hell's tides continually run,
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,
I walk with delinquents with passionate love,
I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts and prostitutes myself,
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny myself?[2]

But it is a mistake to think of the mystic, and especially of Whitman, as the mere onlooker at life, and the moralist as the practical person. There is ultimately of course no distinction between mystic and moralist, the mystic is the moralist become seer. And he is, perhaps, even more strenuous in his life than is the moralist; but life has now assumed for him a different aspect. He is no longer pre-occupied by the hunger and thirst after righteousness—for he feeds satisfied upon the divine bread. He is not worried about sin, because he is conscious of the antiseptic power of the Soul-life which heals the sores of sin, and sloughs off the body of corruption. What is evil passes away when life is earnestly

[1] *L. of G.* (1860), 236. [2] *L. of G.*, 298; (1860), 231.

pursued. He sees that everything which exists at all, however evil it may be, exists by reason of some virtue or excellence which it possesses, and which fits it to its environment. The wise soul uses the excellence of things, and so things hurt it not at all. The things that are not for it are evil to it; but in the sight of God they are not evil, for all things have their value to Him.

Live your life, then, in faith, not in fear; such is the word of the mystic. Condemn nothing; but learn what is proper for your own need; and by sympathy, learn to read the hearts about you, and help them also to live according to the wisdom of the soul. Feed the soul, think of the soul, exercise the soul—and the things, the instincts, the thoughts that are evil to you now, will presently cease to trouble you. For in Whitman's universe the devil is dead.

It is this point of view, reached in his illumination, which enabled him to look out upon all the shame and evil of the world, and yet to rejoice. I doubt if he had as yet justified this attitude to himself by any process of reasoning; and it would be presumptuous in me to attempt the task; he simply accepted it as the only possible, or rather the ultimate and highest attitude of the enlightened soul. When one discovers the soul, that is the attitude in which she stands. The joy of the soul fills the universe. Nothing any longer seems unworthy of song. Not for its own sake, perhaps, but for that which it reveals to the soul. And in the exaltation of this soul-sight he sings.

Towards the end of this section, there is a little group of poems which deal with the voice.[1] Whitman recognised that the human voice is capable of expressing more than mere thoughts. For the whole man speaks in the voice; and as the soul becomes conscious, the voice gains in actual timbre, and wins besides a mystical authority over the heart of the hearer. Each word spoken by the awakened soul is freighted with fuller meaning than it carried before, and every word so spoken

[1] *L. of G.*, 297.

has a beauty which the soul gives it. He illustrates a kindred thought by dwelling upon the different meanings which his own name assumes in different mouths.[1] It would seem as though he realised that power of the name which is familiar to some uncivilised peoples and has been largely forgotten by us.

The section closes with a poignant little verse[2] which declares with all the passion of conviction, that this paper is not paper, nor these words mere words; but that this is the Man Walt Whitman, who hails you here and cries farewell. The book is a sacrament; it is the wafer and wine of a Real Presence; it is a symbol pregnant with personality; it is no book, it is a man.

> Lift me close to your face till I whisper,
> What you are holding is in reality no book, nor part of a book,
> It is a man, flushed and full-blooded—it is I—*So long!*
> We must separate—Here! take from my lips this kiss,
> Whoever you are, I give it especially to you;
> *So long*—and I hope we shall meet again.

The *Salut au Monde* carries this *Ave atque Vale* to each and all.

I have already spoken of "A Word out of The Sea"[3] in which Whitman relates an incident of his childhood on the Long Island coast. This is among the most melodious of his chants; and though Death and Love are the themes of all great poets it would be difficult to quote any passage more suggestive of the pathetic mystery of bereavement, than the song which he puts to the notes of the widowed mocking-bird. The bird's song has purposes unknown to its singer, meanings which are caught by the boy's heart, and awaken there a strange passion and wild chaos, that Death, whose voice is as the accompaniment of the sea to the cry of the bird, can alone soothe and order. It is impossible to read this poem and think of its author as ignorant of personal love and personal loss. The notes of despair and triumph blend together here and elsewhere in this edition.

[1] *L. of G.*, 303. [2] *Ib.* (1860), 242. [3] *L of G.*, 196; see *supra*, 12.

We turn now to the *Enfans d'Adam*, poems of sex, hose name is suggested by Whitman's outlook on life ; on a garden of Eden, and by his conception of him- lf as it were a reincarnate Adam, begetter of a new ce of happier men.[1]

These are the poems which formed the storm-centre Emerson's discussion. They celebrate the love of the dy for its correlative body, the bridegroom's for the ride's; and they celebrate the concern of the soul in production. The proof and law of all life is that it go rth from itself in fertilising power, that it beget or nceive; and without this, life and love would be bereft glory. And more: for Whitman broke wholly with at mysticism which once saw in the organs of sex a formity consequent upon man's fall; he beheld them ther as the vessels of a divine communion.

From this mystical view of Whitman's, Emerson ould conceivably have found no reason for dissent, but e new mysticism was full-blooded and masculine. It rang out of experience, and was in no respect a sub- itute for it. When he wrote of the body, Walt used e word mystically it is true, but he meant the body vertheless, using the word to the full of its meaning. e was very far from the abstract philosophic idealism hich we usually and often unfairly associate with the anscendentalism of Concord. Thoreau, for example, e Oriental dreamer, had been thrilled through by the oody and even brutal fanaticism of John Brown.

Yet Whitman's virility was different from theirs. is celebration of passion was as honest and frank as mar's praise of the vine. To him, the begetting of ildren seemed in itself more satisfying to the soul than y words could express. It needed no apologist; but se out of the region of cold ethics in the divine glow its ecstatic reality.

Such an attitude, it seems to me, is only possible to a an who has known true love, and has lived a chaste and mperate life. And these poems, far from representing

[1] *L. of G.*, 79.

Whitman as a man of dissolute habits, indubitably affor
the clearest proof, if it were needed, of his temperanc
and self-control; but that is, happily, a matter which
beyond dispute. He was not a man to seek unlawfu
pleasures, or to approach life's mysteries irreverently
neither was he a man to treat womanhood, even whe
it had covered itself with shame, with anything but th
utmost gentleness and chivalry. It was in the cause
womanhood, if we can say that it was in any cause, tha
he wrote his poems of sex, seeking, for woman's sake,
wipe away the shame that still clings about paternity
The physical rites of love were beautiful to his sight
and he sought to tear away the obscene draperies an
skulking thoughts by which they have been hidden.

With this in view, he added an inventory of all th
items of the flesh to his poem of "The Body Electric,"
intended as are all his lists to make the subseque
generalisation more actual. These, he said, are th
parts of the soul. For matter and mind are twin aspec
of the one reality, which is the soul. All knowled
comes to the soul through the senses, and if we p
shame upon any function of the body we cripple som
thing in the soul.

In a singular phrase,[3] he declares that he will be th
robust husband of the true women of America, th
women who await him; meaning, I suppose, tha
through the medium of his book, he will quicken
those who are fearless and receptive, the conception
the new Humanity. He is Adam, destined to be th
father of a new race, by the women who are able
receive him. Sexual imagery is rightly used in this co
nection, not only because it is according to mystical pr
cedent, but because sex is the profoundest of the passion
as much spiritual as physical, and all reproductive ener
is sexual. Whitman believed that until this was r
cognised, religion and art must remain comparative
sterile.

The question which these poems raise is far too lar

[1] *Cf.* Mrs. Gilchrist in *In re*, 50. [2] *L. of G.*, 87, 88. [3] *Ib.*, 88

and too delicate for full discussion in this place. And its discussion is rendered more difficult because, present as it is in most of our minds, it is in many still unripe for words. The soul knows its own needs and its own hours, and pages like these of Whitman's are not for every reader. Whitman knew it, and many a time in this volume he asks whether it were not better for you to put the book aside. As for himself, the time had come when these things must be uttered.

The soul must take experience in its own time; but Whitman was convinced that without initiation into the mysteries of love, much of life must remain an enigma to the individual. It was, it would appear, after initiation that he himself had realised his identity with all things. We speak sometimes of the bestial side of our nature, forgetting that when love illuminates it, it is this side in particular which redeems all that before seemed gross among the creatures.

True to his determination to include all, even the outcast, in his synthesis, Whitman, in another poem,[1] companions publicly with sinners and with harlots. He shares their nature also; they, too, have their place. But if he says they are just as good as the best, it is only when seen by the eyes of a Divine Love. He, as much as any man, realises the handicap of sin; in the end the soul must conquer; but think how sin—the sin of the Pharisee and of the callous heart as much as that of the prostitute—disfigures the temple of the soul, and mars the spiritual with the outward body.

Temperate himself, Whitman's sympathy for those who sin in the flesh was very real. And indeed for all sins of passion he felt, perhaps, a special understanding. The story runs that while he was still in Boston,[2] he met a lad he had known in New York, who was now, after a drunken brawl, in which he believed he had killed a companion, escaping from the American police to Canada. The young fellow told Walt his story, and was sent upon his way with that comrade's kiss of

[1] *L. of G.*, 94; (1860), 311. [2] Bucke, 102, 103.

affection which meant so much more than good advice or charity.

Before closing this section, Whitman returns[1] to the Adamic idea, as though to make his meaning unmistakable. In him, Adam has nearly circled the world, and now looks out across the Pacific to his first birth-place in the East; and still his work is unaccomplished. Still must he go on seeking for his bride, the Future. The passion of creation is upon him, he is strained with yearning for that towards which his soul gravitates.

As we finish these poems, we remember how at this time their author impressed those who approached him with two equal qualities, his force and his purity: for great passion is a clear wine in a chaste vessel. He had a right to say as his last word on this subject, "be not afraid of my body"; for, indeed, it was his soul, enamoured of all things, wholesome and pure.

After these poems, comes the "Song of the Road," and other familiar pieces, and then another group wholly new. These appear to have been written in the autumn of 1859,[2] and are called *Calamus;* a name either for a reed or for the sweet-flag,[3] which occurs in the Bible and in the pages of Greek and Latin writers, but is here used of a common American pond-reed, a sort of tall sedge or great spear of grass, a yard or so in height, emitting a pungent watery smell, whose root is used for chewing. In these poems he asserts the soul's need of society, for life and growth. The gospel of self-realisation thus becomes a social gospel, and the thought gives a political significance to these, the most esoteric of all Whitman's poems.

He seems more than usually sensitive about them, and dreads to have them misunderstood. Proud and jealous, he would drive all but a few away from his

[1] *L. of G.*, 95.

[2] *Ib.* (1860), 378. Several of the poems are fuller in this edition, some being omitted in the complete *L. of G.*

[3] Rossetti, *Selections*, 390 n.; Kennedy, 134.

confidences. They are only intended, he says,[1] for his comrades; for it is only they who will understand them.

But in the more obvious sense the poems are for all. It is to comradeship and not to institutions that Whitman looks for a political redemption. He will bind America indissolubly together into the fellowship of his friends.[2] Their friendship shall be called after him,[3] and in his name they shall solve all the problems of Freedom, and bring America to victory. Lovers are the strength of Liberty, comrades perpetuate Equality; America will be established above disaster by the love of her poet's lovers.

Then he turns to himself and his own friends, or rather, perhaps, to his own conscious need for friends. It is curious when one thinks of it, that we have no record of any close friendship, save that of Emerson, dating from these days. And he who knew and loved so many men and women, seems to have carried forward with him no equal friendship from the years of his youth. In this respect, he was solitary as a pioneer. He longed for Great Companions, but he did not meet them at this time upon the open road of daily intercourse.

Yet was he not alone. Some say he wrote of comradeship because he never found such a comrade as him of whom he wrote;[4] but in one at least of these poems he declares that his life, or at the least his singing, depends upon such comradeship. And the absence of any record merely reminds us that Whitman was chary of committing such personal matters to the keeping of a note-book. What record has he left of those women and their children, whose relation to himself must have bulked so largely in the world of his soul? The poems seem to indicate at least one very intimate friendship, more passionately given than returned.

Sometimes, as on the beach of Paumanok, doubt

[1] *L. of G.*, 97, 98, 100, 103. [2] *Ib.*, 99. [3] *Ib.* (1860), 349.
[4] Donaldson, 7.

oversets him. Perhaps after all,[1] appearances do not mean what he sees in them. Perhaps the reality, the purpose, lies still undiscovered in them. Perhaps the identity of the human self after death is but a beautiful fable. There is a perfect answer—shall we say an evasion?—of these questionings and of all doubts, which fellowship provides.

To me, these, and the like of these, are curiously answered by my lovers, my dear friends;
When he whom I love travels with me, or sits a long while holding me by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom—I am silent—I require nothing further,
I cannot answer the question of appearances, or that of identity beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent—I am satisfied,
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

Then he praises Love; all other joys and enterprises of the heroic soul become but little things when weighed against the life of fellowship, the joy of the presence of the beloved.[2] Is this another of those places where the moralist begs to take his leave of the mystic? Let us beseech him to stay, for it is out of the strenuous passions of the soul that all good and lasting works for humanity have sprung. It was the face of Beatrice—and for the Italian, it could only have been her face—which drew Dante down through the circles of horror and up the steep slopes of Purgatory to Paradise. It was the beauty of the lady Poverty, that enabled her lover to kiss the sores of the lepers in the lazar house below Assisi. What would the Apostles have done in the name of their Lord had they not, like Mary the mystic, chosen the better part of communion with Him instead of fidgetting forever, with Martha, upon the errands of duty?

He writes of Love's tragedy, and refusal; of the measured love returned for the infinite love accorded.[3] But oftener he dwells upon its joy. The air becomes

[1] *L. of G.*, 101. [2] *Ib.* (1860), 354. [3] *Ib.* (1860), 355; *L. of G.*, 110.

alive with music he had never heard before.[1] The passion in his heart responds to a passion of which hitherto he had not dreamed, hidden in the heart of the world, awaiting its hour to break forth. And as these poems have come slowly up from out of the inner purpose of things, to find utterance upon Whitman's pages, so slowly will their meaning arise in the hearts of those that read them.[2] It is not to be guessed in a moment. For they are freighted with the mystery which unfolds in the patience of the soul.

Although he warns his reader from time to time to beware of him, for he is not at all the man he seems, a note of yearning for confidence cannot be suppressed. He confesses that his very life-blood speaks in these pages,[3] and that his soul is heavy with infinite passion for the love of its Comrades that shall be. Sometimes, as he passes a stranger in the streets, he knows in himself that once they were each other's; some deep chord of life thrilling, as though with memory, to promise that they will yet come together again.[4] Ah, how many and many an one of these his mystic kin must the lands of the earth contain! It is not America only, but the whole human race that he will bind at last into his fellowship, laughing at institutions and at laws, persuading all men by the power of the Soul which is in all.[5] One institution there is which he confesses[6] that he would inaugurate. Let men who love one another kiss when they meet, and walk hand in hand. It is no mere sentiment; he sees that love must have its witness. In warm manly love is the mightiest power in the universe, a power that laughs at oppressors and at death.[7]

I dreamed in a dream, I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth,
I dreamed that was the new City of Friends,
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love—it led the rest,
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
And in all their looks and words.

[1] *L. of G.*, 343. [2] *Ib.*, 103, 104. [3] *Ib.*, 104, etc. [4] *Ib.*, 106.
[5] *Ib.*, 107. [6] *Ib.* (1860), 350. [7] *L. of G.*, 109.

Calamus, like the bundle labelled *Leaves of Grass*, closes on the note of personal presence.[1]

I trust it has already been sufficiently suggested that Whitman's mysticism is not to be confused with much that hitherto has passed under that name. Mysticism it is, for it is the expression of mystical experience; but it is clearly not the mysticism which is completed in a circle of devotion, religious exercises, meditation and ecstasy. It is the mysticism which recreates the world in a new image. Professor Royce, in his most interesting lectures on "The World and the Individual," has described it, or something very similar to it, under the title of Idealism; and his careful and suggestive elaboration of his theme is the best indirect commentary upon what I have called the mysticism of Whitman with which I am acquainted. It includes an admirable exposition of the meaning of the Soul or Self.

Your whole world, he declares, is your whole Self—Whitman would perhaps have said, it is the mirror which reveals yourself. The Infinite Universe, whereof yours is but a part, is the Self of God. We live, but are not lost in Him, for we are as it were His members. There are two aspects of the human self: the temporal, in which it appears as a mere momentary consciousness, and the eternal, which reveals it as an indestructible purpose, the essence of reality. For reality, the professor argues, is the visible expression of purpose or meaning.

To proceed to the social aspect of this teaching: the individual, when he becomes conscious of his world—his Self—becomes conscious, too, that his world is only one aspect of the Universe, that there are a myriad others, and that the Universal Life consists of a Fellowship of such Selves as his. Thus, God is the Many-in-One; in Him the Many are one Self and complete. And the Many do not only seek completion in the Divine Unity; they also seek fellowship with one another. The Divine life, which is the basis of Human

[1] *L. of G.*, 112.

life, is thus a life of Fellowship—as the Apostle says, it is Love. It is not merely a trinity, it is a City of Friends; or rather of Lovers, as Edward Carpenter suggested in his recent essays.[1]

Now I am convinced that this thought underlies *Calamus;* not, indeed, as a metaphysical theory, but as one of those overwhelming realisations of the ultimate significance of things which I have described inadequately as Whitman's symbolism. Seeking to plumb the depths of passion, he found God. Sex became for him, in its essence, the potency of that Life wherein we are One. And comradeship, a passion as intense as that of sex, he beheld as the same relation between spiritual or ætherial bodies.[2] He was aware that the noblest of passions is the most liable to base misunderstandings. But in it alone the soul finds full freedom. Sex passion finds its proper expression in physical rites, it is the passion of the life in Time; on the contrary, the passion of comrades is of eternity and only finds expression in Death.[3] This appears to have been Whitman's conviction.

Yet another bundle follows *Calamus;* a packet of more or less personal letters or messages called *Messenger Leaves.* In subsequent editions they were sorted out into other sections. They are not all new; but among those that now appear for the first time are the daring and noble lines to Jesus.

My spirit to yours, dear brother,
Do not mind because many, sounding your name, do not understand you,
I do not sound your name, but I understand you, (there are others also;)
I specify you with joy, O my comrade, to salute you, and to salute those who are with you, before and since—and those to come also,
That we all labour together, transmitting the same charge and succession;
We few, equals, indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes—allowers of all theologies,
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,

[1] *The Art of Creation.* [2] *L. of G.*, 96. [3] *Ib.*, 96.

We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject not the disputers, nor anything that is asserted, . . .
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers, as we are.[1]

Scattered through the generations—so we may read his thought—are those who have come into the cosmic consciousness or larger life, who have passed beyond the reach of time and of mere argument, and who therefore understand one another as others cannot understand them. The love and communion which exists between such Great Companions, is a pledge and earnest of the Society of the Future, when all men shall be one, even as these are one.

The thought may shock those to whom it comes suddenly, if they see in Whitman the "mere man" of their own narrow conception of humanity. But in judging him we must remember that he openly claims for himself and for other men all the Divine attributes which Christians are in the habit of ascribing to their Lord. Whitman believed that Jesus identified himself with Humanity; and that all who enter, as he entered, into the cosmic life share in the fellowship of God, even as did he.

More fully than many Christians, Whitman recognised Jesus as literally his elder brother; he joined with him in the words "Our Father," feeling them to be true. And as one reads the gospel narratives one ventures to believe that the Master who called the disciples his friends, would himself have been eager to welcome the assertion of such a relationship.

Another letter[2] is to one about to die; it is filled not with melancholy but with congratulation. The body that dies is but an excrement, the Self is eternal and goes on into ever fuller sunlight.

Another,[3] which has aroused perhaps more misunderstanding than anything which Whitman wrote, is addressed to a prostitute. It hardly seems to call for

[1] *L. of G.*, 298; *cf. An American Primer*, 18, 19.
[2] *Ib.*, 344.
[3] *Ib.*, 299.

explanation; for it is like the simple offering of the hand of friendship to an outcast; the assertion that for her, too, Whitman's living eternal comradeship is real and close, accompanied by the injunction that she be worthy of such friendship.

He writes to rich givers[1] in the Franciscan spirit; for he that is willing to give all, is able to accept.

To a pupil[2] he suggests that personality is the tool of all good work and usefulness. To be magnetic is to be great. Come then and first become yourself.

But it is impossible even to refer in passing to all the separate poems, each one with its living suggestion. Some of the briefest are not the least pregnant.

The book closes with poems of departure. A dread falls upon him;[3] perhaps after all he may not linger, to go to and fro through the lands he loves, awakening comrades; presently his voice also will cease. But here and now at least his soul has appeared and been realised; and that in itself should be enough.

Then he says his farewell. His words have been for his own era; and in every age, the race must find anew its own poets for its own words. But till America shall have absorbed his message, he must stand, and his influence, his spirit, must endure.[4] After all, he does but seek, with passionate longing, one worthier than himself, who yet shall take his place. For him, he has prepared.

Now is he come to die. Without comprehending or questioning, he has obeyed his mystical commission; he has sown the Divine seed with which he was entrusted; he has given the message with which he was burdened, to women and to young men; now he passes on into the state for which all experience and service has been preparing him. He ceases to sing. His work is accomplished. Now disembodied and free, he can respond to all that love him, and enter upon the intenser Reality of the Unknown.

[1] *L. of G.*, 216. [2] *Ib.*, 302. [3] *Ib.*, 370; (1860), 449. [4] *Ib.*, 380.

Dear friend, whoever you are, here, take this kiss,
I give it especially to you—Do not forget me,
I feel like one who has done his work—I progress on,
The unknown sphere, more real than I dreamed, more direct, darts awakening rays about me—*So long!*
Remember my words—I love you—I depart from materials,
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.[1]

[1] *L. of G.*, 382.

CHAPTER XI

AMERICA AT WAR

THE new edition of *Leaves of Grass* pleased the critics as little as its predecessors, but had a wider circulation. Some four or five thousand copies had been sold before the house of Thayer and Eldridge went down in the financial crash which followed on the outbreak of the war.[1] Emerson came in again for some share of the critical assault, though his name was in no way connected with the new issue. Of Whitman himself a London journalist declared[2] that he was the most silly, the most blasphemous, and the most disgusting writer that he had ever perused.

But if it found fresh enemies, the new edition found also new friends; and notably in England, whither a few adventurous copies of the earlier versions had already penetrated. Both Emerson and Thoreau had sent them to their English friends—among whom was Carlyle—but apparently with scant acknowledgment. Ruskin's correspondent, Mr. Thomas Dixon of Sunderland, had purchased a few examples of the first edition at Dutch auction; and some of these he forwarded to Mr. William Bell Scott, who again handed on one of them to Mr. W. M. Rossetti; an act which, as the story will show, proved to be of great importance to Walt Whitman.[3] It was the book of 1860, however, which first aroused the younger generation of English-

[1] Burroughs, 20, 21.

[2] *Literary Gazette*, 7th July, 1860; *qu.* Bucke, 202.

[3] W. M. Rossetti, *Selections from W. W.*, introd., and E. Rhys, *Selections from W. W.*, introd.; W. B. Scott, *Autobiog.*, ii., 32, 33, 268, 269.

men, among whom was the late Mr. Addington Symonds. "Within the space of a few years," says he, "we were all reading and discussing Walt."

The book appeared under the shadow of impending war. With the Presidential election of 1860, America came to the edge of the abyss; and the return of Abraham Lincoln was promptly followed by the organisation of secession. Whitman was still in Boston when, early in the spring, Lincoln first made his appearance in New York, W. C. Bryant introducing him to a great meeting at the Cooper Institute.

The famous speech which he then delivered lived long in its hearers' memory; but even the personal impression which he made, remarkable as it was, hardly prepared New York to learn in the following May that it was Abraham Lincoln, and not W. H. Seward, the nominal leader of the Republican party, who had received the Presidential nomination at the great Chicago Convention.

Had the Democratic party been able to hold together, Lincoln could not have carried the election; but it was now split, and further weakened by the appearance of a Constitutional Union Party.[1] The most dangerous of the opposing candidates seemed to be Lincoln's old antagonist and subsequent loyal supporter, Judge Douglas, who represented his well-worn policy of local option, or "squatter sovereignty". Breckinridge of Kentucky openly advocated the extension of slave territory; while Bell, the Unionist, kept his own counsel.

Early in the summer of that great struggle, Whitman returned to New York. In June[2] he was among the immense crowd of interested spectators who filled Broadway from side to side, on the arrival of the first Japanese embassy to America; and he was of the thousands who welcomed the succession of distinguished visitors who came, that ominous summer, to the capital

[1] There is no fact more important to be remembered for a right understanding of the events that follow than this, that the Slave party only controlled a portion, perhaps a minority, of the Democrats.

[2] *L. of G.*, 190; *Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, iii., 472.

of the West. There was the *Great Eastern*, that leviathan of the modern world, whose advent was so long and so eagerly anticipated; there was Garibaldi, fresh from the fields whereon Italy had become a kingdom—not indeed the sister republic of Mazzini's ardent dream, who should have given the new law of Liberty to Europe, but at least something more than a memory and a geographical term.

Another, in whom Whitman felt an even warmer interest, was "Baron Renfrew," otherwise the Prince of Wales. The fair royal stripling of those days attracted the stalwart Democrat, who like old George Fox, could recognise a man under a crown as readily as a man in rags. Whitman's eyes were keen to read personality; perhaps we should rather say that the sense by which personality is distinguished was highly developed in him. And he to whom the attributes of rank were non-existent, fell in love with this young man[1] whose warm heart was to make him perhaps the best beloved of monarchs, as he afterwards fell in love with many a private soldier carried in wounded from the field. Albert Edward was one of those strangers in whom Whitman recognised a born comrade; and this fact at once raises his democratic sentiment out of the region of class feeling.

He was a witness, too, of the advent of other visitors even more brilliant, and burdened even more to the popular fancy, and perhaps to his own, with significance. He saw the extraordinary display of the heavens—the huge meteor, luminous almost as the moon, which fell in Long Island Sound, and the unannounced comet flaring in the north.

The autumn was loud with the electoral struggle. The presence of three opposing candidates was not enough to assure Lincoln's success. The general expectation seems to have leaned towards an electoral tie, none of the candidates polling a majority of the votes; and this would have resulted, as on the similar occasion

[1] *L. of G.*, 1876.

of 1824, in the choice between them being left to the House of Representatives. Upon the result of such choice the slave party was willing to stake its hopes of success; anticipating that even though he were the popular candidate, Congress would not select Lincoln, but would put him aside, as it had passed by Jackson in its previous opportunity.

But to the consternation of the South, the "black Republican" rail-splitter polled a clear majority over all three antagonists combined. A majority, that is to say, of electoral votes, for the American President is not chosen directly by the people, but by the people's delegates.[1] Each State elects its quota of Presidential electors, chosen not in proportion to the strength of parties in the State, but all of them representing the dominant party.[2] Thus it may happen that a candidate, like Judge Douglas, who polls a large minority of the total popular vote, will receive a mere handful of electoral suffrages, having failed to carry more than one or two States. Lincoln was chosen by 180 votes to 123; and though Douglas's popular poll was two-thirds of Lincoln's, and nearly as large as that of the two other candidates combined, his electoral support was only one-tenth of the voices against Lincoln. The Republican vote in the country fell short of the combined opposition poll by a million out of a total of less than five million votes. From the popular point of view, Lincoln was, therefore, in the difficult position of a minority President.

The result of the November elections was scarcely made public before a committee of Southern Congressmen issued a manifesto,[3] proclaiming the immediate need for a separate Confederacy of slave-holding States, if the institution upon which their prosperity depended was to be saved from the machinations of Northern politicians. They audaciously identified both Lincoln and the Republican party with the policy of Abolition; whereas the choice of Lincoln instead of Seward, the

[1] Bryce, *op. cit.*, i., 46, 47. [2] But see *ib.*, i., 44.
[3] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 445.

abolitionist, might in itself have been accepted as sufficient evidence that the North, while determined to preserve the Union, was resolute against interference with the internal policy of the South.

The Manifesto was followed, on the 20th of December, by the secession of South Carolina, ever since Calhoun's day the leader of revolt against Federal power. Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana promptly joined her.

Although Lincoln's election was assured in November, the executive power remained till the beginning of March in the feeble hands of Buchanan, who was the creature of advisers themselves divided in counsel, to the signal advantage of that section which supported the revolt. When, at last, the outgoing President made up his mind to dismiss his secessionist secretary of war, the Cotton-State Caucus called a Convention at Montgomery, the picturesque and sleepy old capital of Alabama; and this finally formulated a permanent constitution for the Confederacy precisely a week after the inauguration of the new President.[1]

In the meantime Lincoln could only stand a spectator of the wholly ineffective measures which were being taken to frustrate the active aggression of the slave power. But towards the end of February he set out for Washington. Passing on his way through Indiana and Ohio, he was received by an enormous crowd in New York; and here Whitman first saw him, not from his favourite seat upon a stage-coach, for the streets were too densely packed for traffic, but as one of the thirty or forty thousand silent pedestrian onlookers collected in the city's heart, where now the post-office stands.

Whitman well knew what the ominous silence, which greeted that loosely-made gaunt figure, concealed;[2] and how different was the mood of New York that day from the holiday-making good-humour with which it was wont to greet the arrival of other illustrious guests. Under the speechlessness lurked a black moody wrath ready to break forth.

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 449. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 302.

It was a pleasant afternoon, just twelve months after that other February day when Whitman and Emerson had paced up and down the slope of Boston Common in earnest colloquy. Lincoln went silently into the Astor House without any demonstration either of welcome or of open hostility; thereafter proceeding to his inauguration. He was compelled to pass secretly through Baltimore, where violence was only too ready to manifest itself on the slightest encouragement. The fact that the President-elect, in order to reach the capital, had thus to travel through a State which was only with difficulty retained for the Union cause, shows how close that cause was to disaster. And though, as Lincoln stated in his inaugural address, the bulk of the American people opposed secession, and the party which favoured it was but a comparatively small minority; yet it could only be either an ignorant optimism, or on the contrary a firmly founded and earnest faith in the devotion of the great mass of the citizens to the ideals of their fathers, which could face such a situation without dismay.

The weight of numbers, however, favoured the North. A review of the census returns show that at their first compilation in 1790 the population of the Southern and the Northern divisions of the country was almost absolutely equal; but that from the beginning of the century the increase in the latter was the more rapid; so that in 1860 the free population of the North was more than double that of the South.

But in spite of this great numerical preponderance, the North itself was not united on the question at issue, as is clearly shown by the returns of the Presidential election, when Douglas polled a million Free-state votes. For though Douglas opposed secession, he did not oppose the extension of slavery. It is shown clearly, too, in the attitude of New York; of which more, later.

And beyond this the Southerner was in some respects better fitted, as well by his virtues as by his faults, for a military life. The qualities of leadership and of obedience are cultivated under an aristocratic ideal, as they are not under a democratic. And the South, which had

practically controlled the executive under Buchanan, and especially the department of war, was better prepared to take the field than was the North. On the other hand, the strength of the Union lay in its cause, and in the latent idealism of the American people, which awoke into activity at the first menace to the Stars and Stripes.

Whether the war really settled anything, whether it might possibly have been avoided, whether secession left to itself would not literally have cut its own throat, these are interesting philosophic speculations into which we need not enter. For already the spectre of war had long been abroad, stalking through the unharvested fields of Kansas and Nebraska, and gesticulating with horrid signs and mocking whispers in every corner of America. When the slave party had first raised its fatal cry of "our institution in danger," it had raised the cry of war. And when at last men like Lincoln retorted with the declaration that the Union was irrefragable—that secession could only be justified after some criminal use of the Federal power to override the rights of the minority—the battle was manifestly joined.

It is but fair to add that although the party of Lincoln had now truly become the party of the Union, the first line of cleavage between North and South was marked out by a schismatic spirit in the North itself, by its support of its own sectional interests, when enforcing a policy of protection upon the whole country.[1] There can be little doubt that the mistrust felt in the South, while largely due to anterior causes, was born under this evil star. So true does it seem that when a nation's policy is being shaped according to merely material interests, the seeds are being sown of future revolution.

The fatal movement of American destiny towards its crisis must have dominated much of Whitman's thought at this time. Secession was in the very air he breathed;

[1] See *supra*, p. 24.

for at its first proclamation an echoing voice was heard in New York itself.

Here Mayor Wood, after a short period of deserved seclusion, had returned to power. Unsatisfied with his patronage he dreamed of wider fields. Was it not the splendid vision of a Presidency which encouraged this fatuous person to declare for a second secession, the creation of a new island republic of New York? "Tri-insula" was to have been its title,[1] and its territories would have comprised Mannahatta, Staten, and Long Islands. The proposal was enthusiastically received by the absurd creatures of Tammany, who then sat upon the City Council. But their complacent folly was of brief duration. It was dispersed by the first rebel gun-shot.

Whitman had been at the opera on Fourteenth Street, and was strolling homeward down Broadway about mid-night, on the 13th of April, when he was met by the newspaper boys crying the last extras with more than ordinary vehemence. Buying a copy and stopping to read it under the lamps of the Metropolitan Hotel he was startled by the news that war had actually broken out. The day before, Confederate troops had fired upon the flag at Charleston Harbour and Fort Sumter. South Carolina had flung her challenge down.

The President immediately called for troops, and the response of the North was instantaneous. New York herself did not hesitate, but voted at once a million dollars and sent forward her quota of men.[3] Mayor Wood was among the many thousands of Democrats who became patriots that day—in so far as one can suddenly become patriotic.

Whitman was not among the volunteers, but his brother George, who was ten years his junior, was one of the first to offer.[4] He had been following the family trade as a Brooklyn carpenter, and henceforward

[1] Roosevelt, 202-04. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 15, 16.
[3] Roosevelt, 203; *Mem. Hist. N.Y.*, iii., 485.
[4] *W.'s Memoranda during the War*, 59.

WHITMAN AT FORTY-FOUR

proved himself a brave and able soldier. He was neither braver nor abler than Walt, but the latter stayed at home, and there are those who have blamed him for it.

Putting on one side, as they have done, his subsequent service to the army, such blame springs from a misunderstanding of the man's nature. There are some men wholly above the reproach of cowardice or indifference, whom it is impossible for us to conceive as shouldering a gun. And for those who knew him most intimately, Whitman was such a man. Many men who loved peace heard the call to arms and obeyed. Abraham Lincoln[1] himself—to whom America was entrusting the conduct of the war—had but now proclaimed its futility, while his whole nature revolted from its cruel folly. And had his destiny bidden him to join the colours one cannot doubt that Walt Whitman would have done so.[2] But that inner voice, which he obeyed, rather forbade than encouraged him.

And even in years of war there is service one can do for one's country out of the ranks. No war can wholly absorb the energies of a civilised people, for the daily life of the nation must be continued. There are, besides, tasks that have a prior claim upon the loyalty of the individual, even to the defence of the flag. And Whitman had such a task, for he bore, as it were, within his soul the infant of an ideal America, like a young mother whose life is the consecrated guardian of her unborn babe. His book was now, in a sense, complete; but none could feel more strongly than he that even his book was only an inadequate expression of his purpose; while life lasted his days were to be devoted to the creation of an immortal comradeship, and a spiritual atmosphere in which the seeds concealed in his writings might germinate.

It must also be noted that, though in his open letter to Emerson[3] he had written of war almost as a soldier whose blood kindles at the sound of the trumpets, and though the spirit of his book is one which "blows battles

[1] Inaugural, 1861. [2] Bucke, 104. [3] *L. of G.* (1856), Appendix.

into men," yet the last edition had been marked by a curious and significant approximation to Quakerism. It was in 1860, when war was so near at hand, that he substituted the Friendly numeral equivalents for the usual names of the months and days of the week; not, assuredly, because he objected to the recognition of heathen deities, like the early Friends, but in order to avow some relationship between himself and Quakerism. The increase of mystical consciousness may have made him more aware at this time of his real identity with this society of mystics to which he never nominally belonged.

We have had repeated occasion to note the Quaker traits in Whitman's character, and here, at the opening of the war, it is well to emphasise them anew.[1] His love of silence, his spiritual caution, his veracity and simplicity of speech, his soul-sight, and the practical balance of his mysticism—that temperance of character upon which his inspirational faculties were founded—and, finally, the equal democratic goodwill he showed to all men; these qualities speak the original Quaker type. And the world may well extend to Whitman the respect it acknowledges for the Quaker's refusal to bear arms.

It was, indeed, because he loved America so well that he did not fight with the common weapons. We have seen that he associated himself intimately with the American genius, a genius which necessarily includes the qualities of the South at least equally with those of the North; he himself[2] inclining to lay the emphasis upon the Southern attributes, as though their wealth in the emotional and passionate elements were more essential than any other. America robbed of the South would, indeed, have been America divided against herself. Hence he shared to the full in the desire and struggle for unity against the sordid party which instigated secession. But he knew that a victory of arms was not necessarily a victory of principles, and it was for the principle that he strove.

[1] *Cf. In re*, 213. [2] *Cf. Comp. Prose*, 255, etc.

May we not assert the possibility of a highly developed and powerful personality exerting itself upon the side of Justice and Liberty in moments of national crisis, in some manner more potent than that of merely physical service? Would not Whitman have been wasting his forces if he had surrendered himself to the spirit of the hour, and gone forth with the volunteers to stop or to forward a bullet or a bayonet? These are questions we well may ponder, and without attempting to give reasons for so doing, we may answer in the affirmative.

Certain it is that two or three days after he first read the news of South Carolina's challenge, and the day following the President's appeal, he recorded this singular vow in one of his notebooks as though it were the seal upon a struggle of his spirit: "April 16th, 1861. I have this day, this hour, resolved to inaugurate for myself a pure, perfect, sweet, clean-blooded, robust body, by ignoring all drinks but water and pure milk, and all fat meats, late suppers—a great body, a purged, cleansed, spiritualised, invigorated body." [1]

Read with its context of the events which were occupying his mind, may we not surmise that this was a new girding of the loins for some service of the great cause, more strenuous than ever, though perhaps yet undefined; that this vow of abstinence for the establishment of a spiritualised body, made thus at the opening of the war, and at the time of George's enrolment, when Lincoln's call for volunteers was ringing in the heart of every loyal citizen [2]—that this vow was that of an athlete going into training for a supreme effort; and an athlete whose labours are upon that unseen field, whereon it may be the battles of the visible world are really won. It was thus that Whitman obeyed the calls of duty both within him and without.

Lincoln's first tasks were to create an army and to confine the area of insurrection. He proclaimed the blockade of the Southern ports; called out more regu-

[1] MSS. Harned. [2] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 451.

lars and volunteers, and succeeded in preventing West Virginia and Missouri from joining the Confederacy. Had he been able to retain for the service of the Union a certain brilliant young officer, the war might have opened and closed upon a very different story; but Robert Lee had already joined the Southern army, though not without an inward conflict.

No leader of equal genius appeared upon the other side until Grant came out of the West. The weakness of Northern generalship was only too clearly evidenced in the defeat at Bull Run, midway between the two capitals, which were now little more than a hundred miles apart, the Confederate Government having removed to Richmond. As a result of the defeat Washington itself lay in imminent peril; and if General Johnston had followed up his advantage, it would have fallen into his hands. But he missed his hour, and the consternation of the North was followed by a mood of stubborn resolution.

Slowly but surely Lincoln built up his military organisation. In the whirlpool of currents he remained steadfast to his single policy of maintaining the Union. He succeeded in evading the occasions of war which threatened abroad; he conciliated all in the South which was at that time amenable to conciliation; and, eager as he was for emancipation, he refused to be driven before the storm of Abolitionist sentiment which had risen in the North.

During 1862, while Grant and Farragut were gradually clearing the Mississippi, the great natural thoroughfare of America, Lee was more than holding his own among the hills and rivers of Virginia. The opposing army of the Potomac remained ineffective under the brilliant but dilatory McClellan, and his more active successors, Burnside and Hooker. Lee assumed the aggressive, and invaded Maryland; but was turned back from a projected raid into Pennsylvania by the drawn battle of Antietam; in which, as in many of the previous engagements of this army, George Whitman fought.

Antietam was immediately followed by the preliminary proclamation of emancipation, to take effect in all States which should still continue in rebellion at the commencement of the new year. Lincoln's mind had long been exercised upon the best means of compassing the liberation of the slaves; and until the close of the war, he himself looked for the ultimate solution of the problem to the method of compensation adopted by Great Britain in the West Indies. This was successfully applied to the district of Columbia, but the offer of it received no response either from the other States to which it was magnanimously made, or from Lincoln's own Cabinet. The present proclamation was intended as a blow at the industrial resources of the rebellion.

In mid-December General Burnside lost nearly 13,000 men at Fredericksburg, Virginia, and reading the long lists of wounded, the Whitmans came upon George's name among the more serious casualties.[1] Great was the distress in the home on Portland Avenue, and Walt set off at once to seek him at the front. His pocket was picked in a crush at Philadelphia Station, and he arrived penniless in Washington.[2] There, searching the hospitals for three days and nights, he could get no news of his brother's whereabouts, but managed somehow to make his way to the army's headquarters at Falmouth. It had been a long, melancholy journey; but arrived at the camp, he found his brother already well again, his wound having healed rapidly.

This sudden journey had momentous consequences for Whitman. His stay in New York was, perhaps naturally, drawing to a close. There are indications in the last poems that he was contemplating a westward journey, and possibly a settlement beyond the Rockies.[3] Although he paid it frequent visits, he never lived again in Brooklyn.

At Falmouth he found among the wounded a number

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 15. [2] *Wound-Dresser*, 23, 47, 48.
[3] *L. of G.* (1860), 371.

of young fellows whom he had known in New York.[1] He took a natural interest in their welfare, and even though he felt he could do little for them, lingered till a party going up to Washington offered him an opportunity for usefulness in their escort. Arriving at the capital, he found innumerable similar occasions in the many hospitals which had been established in and about the city. These he began to visit daily, supporting himself by writing letters to the New York and Brooklyn press —to the *New York Times* in particular—and by copying work in the paymaster's office.[2] It was not till two years later that he obtained regular employment in the Civil Service; but during the whole of that time he was paying almost daily visits to the wards, in his honorary and voluntary capacity, as friend of the wounded.

The number of these was periodically swollen by great battles. On the 4th of May, 1863, General Hooker lost the day at Chancellorsville, and was replaced by Meade. Early in July, Lee made a second alarming dash into the North, but was turned back by General Meade from the bloody field of Gettysburg, where the total losses reached the appalling figure of 60,000.

By this time, more than two years after the fall of Fort Sumter, the first easy boasting of a short campaign and an overwhelming triumph, indulged by both sides, had long died; and the solemn sense of the great tragedy being enacted before its eyes possessed the nation. This sentiment could not have been more nobly expressed than in the words used by the President, when, speaking at the dedication of a portion of the Gettysburg battlefield as a national cemetery,[3] he said: "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom: and that government of the people by the people for the people shall not perish from the earth".

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 21; *Wound-Dresser*, 24.
[2] Burroughs, 29; *Wound-Dresser*, 10, etc. [3] 19th Nov., 1863.

Meade's victory, and the news following fast upon it of Grant's capture of Vicksburg, with the consequent reopening of the Mississippi, reassured the wavering faith of many patriots. But the situation was still full of peril. In this same month—July, 1863—there were serious riots in New York,[1] instigated by the "Copperheads," as the Northern sympathisers with the Confederacy were dubbed, in opposition to the first draft for the army under the general conscription law of March. In these, more than a thousand persons were killed or wounded.

The riots were the more difficult to quell because all available troops and volunteers had been sent to the front; and these of course included a great proportion of the stabler citizens. At the same time the disaffected elements remained in their full strength. The political character of the disturbance was plain enough; for the rioters set upon any negroes they met, slinging them to the lamp-posts, and would have burned down the hospital, full of wounded Union soldiers, had they not been prevented.

It is some satisfaction to know that we cannot couple the name of Fernando Wood with these outrages. There was something genuine in his patriotism. He was now in Congress, and had recently been vainly attempting, in his usual futile fashion, to negotiate a peace.

Both the draft and the riots caused the Whitman family no little anxiety. George, who had entered the army as a private and was promoted stage by stage till he became a lieutenant-colonel, was of course already at the front;[2] and Jeff, who had married four years earlier, was keeping the home together for the old mother and helpless youngest son, as well as for his own wife and their young children. Anything that happened to him would involve the happiness of the whole family. They feared especially that he might be drawn for service;

[1] Roosevelt, 203-206. [2] *Wound-Dresser*, 94.

and Walt wrote from Washington that in that event, he would do all in his power to raise the necessary money to provide a substitute.[1]

Walt himself never closed his ears against the call to serve in the ranks, if it should come to him. Had he himself been drawn, he might have regarded the circumstance as the intimation of duty; but he was not. Instead he took the risks of small-pox in the infectious wards, as well as that which is incurred by the frequent dressing of gangrened wounds; and he bore the spiritual burden of all the pathetic war-wreckage which drifted into Washington month after weary month.

The tension of those days was terrible to him. Devoted to the "Mother of All," the American nation, he loved her sons both North and South with an equal affection, their suffering and destruction wringing his heart. For, mystic as he was, he had all the strong passions of humanity, and felt to the full the agonies of the flesh. On the one side also, his own brother was in the hottest of the fighting throughout these years; while on the other, it is just possible that some young son of his own, known or unknown to him, may have served among the boys in the opposite ranks before the war was over. His Abolitionist friends would sigh, and say the struggle must go on till every slave should be free; but he who valued freedom not less than they, and understood perhaps better what it really means, dissented from them.

The first sight of a battlefield made him cry out for peace; and if in the following months he felt the exhilaration which breathed from the simple heroism displayed by the soldiers, he still saw that war is not all heroic, but in time must darken the fairest cause. The terrible burden of its inconceivable extravagance began to weigh upon him like a nightmare. Each new season, with its prospective train of ambulances, its legion of tragedies, bewildered him with its horror; till he angrily denied that the whole population of negroes could be worth so

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 95.

terrific a purchase.[1] It may have been the exaggerated retort to an extremist argument; but indeed it was not for the negroes that the war was being fought; it was not for the powerful but highly coloured manifesto of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but for the "Declaration of Independence," and for the Constitution of America. And this both Whitman and Lincoln realised: they knew the negro of the South as the New Englander never knew him, and were firm in demanding for him the rights of a human being; but they knew also that mere abolition would not give him these, nor could it render him capable of the right exercise of American citizenship.

Though Lee had been thrown back from Gettysburg, his army had never recognised a defeat; and the chief danger to the cause of American unity lay in the conviction of the South that its general and his men were really invincible. For two more years they kept the field, with a heroic determination that appears at the same time little short of criminal when we consider the conditions involved upon all the parties to resistance. And when we add to these the story of the Southern military prisons, even the chivalrous fame of Lee becomes stained with an ineffaceable shame. Better a thousand times to have acknowledged defeat than to have been guilty of enforcing such things. But the pride of the South had become rigid, and would only admit defeat after it was broken. Its political leaders had staked everything upon victory; and it would seem that they preferred to sacrifice a whole generation of their supporters and victims rather than bear the penalty of their failure.

When Grant, or rather the reckless courage of his American volunteers,[2] had crushed General Bragg at Chattanooga, and his friend Sherman had completed the work of clearing Tennessee, Lee's army remained the sole hope of the desperately impoverished South. But still in itself and in its leader it was absolutely confident.

[1] *Cf.* Kennedy. [2] Owen Wister's *Grant* (Beacon Biogs.), 95, 96.

A similar confidence inspired the hearts of the Union soldiers, when in March, 1864, the downright laconic general from the West was given supreme command, and went into Virginia to crush his antagonist by mere force of numbers and determination.

In Grant at last both Lincoln and the army had found the man they were waiting for. But still a year went by before the task was accomplished—a year whose memory is the most terrible of the war—upon whose page are inscribed such names as, The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Bloody Angle, North Anna, Cold Harbour, recalling those awful fields whereon more than a hundred thousand soldiers fell. While Grant was stubbornly pushing Lee back upon Richmond, and finally holding him there, Sherman was cutting him off from further support by that extraordinary march south-eastwards from Chattanooga through Atalanta to the sea. He captured Savannah just before Christmas; and afterwards turning north, and wading through all the morasses and crossing all the innumerable streams and rivers of the Carolinas, he completed his errand a few days before his chief entered the Southern capital.

Several futile attempts had been made to bring about a reconciliation between North and South before the bitter end;[1] but Lincoln, eager as he was for peace, stood out irrevocably for the acknowledgment of the Union, and now added to it the emancipation of the slaves. It was clear that nothing short of Lee's capitulation could satisfy the country or end the war. On the 3rd April, Richmond surrendered to Grant; and on the day after, the President, who was then with the army, entered the city which the evacuating forces had fired. Five more days and Lee gave himself up: by the end of the month the surrender of the Confederate troops had been effected, while Jefferson Davis was captured in Georgia on the 10th of May. A fortnight later the combined hosts of Grant and Sherman passed before the President in a last grand review along Pennsylvania Avenue and before the White House, to be thereafter disbanded.

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 579.

But the President was no longer Abraham Lincoln. Re-elected in the preceding autumn, in spite of Republican intrigues and the dangerous opposition of General McClellan, who was put forward by the Democrats, Lincoln had been assassinated during a performance at Ford's Theatre, on the evening of the 14th of April, the fourth anniversary of the fall of Fort Sumter.

The loss to his country was irreparable. More than any other of its Presidents, either before or since, Abraham Lincoln embodied the real genius of the American nation, and in the hour of their agony he was the father of his people. Slowly they had learnt his strength and his wisdom; but they had hardly begun to understand the greatness of a heart which was able to love the South with a mother's tenderness even while it was in arms against him.

The Vice-President, who stepped into his place, was a Union Democrat; he also loved the South, but less wisely than well. His rash haste in the reconstruction of the governments of the defeated States threw the nation into the hands of the group of narrowly partisan Republicans which continued to rule America with unscrupulous ability and ill-concealed self-interest[1] for sixteen years, threatening by its attitude towards the Southern people to alienate their sympathies forever from the Union.

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 638.

CHAPTER XII

THE PROOF OF COMRADESHIP

WHITMAN'S residence in Washington and the nature of his occupation in the hospitals, through the years of the war, have rendered an outline of their history almost necessary. Of his manner of life during this period we have many notes and records, both in his own letters and memoranda and in the biographical accounts afterwards printed by his friends.

During the first five or six months after his arrival he took his meals and spent much of his spare time with Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor, who had recently settled in the city.[1] He boarded in the same house as they, about six blocks from the Treasury building, where O'Connor worked, and a mile from the Armory Square Hospital, where lay many of his own wounded friends.

William Douglas O'Connor was a strikingly handsome man of thirty years, full of spirit and eloquence.[2] He had previously been a Boston journalist, had married in that city a charming wife, and was the father of two children. He had lost his post there through his outspoken support of John Brown and the attack on Harper's Ferry. While out of employment he had written his novel, *Harrington*, an eloquent story of the Abolitionist cause, which was published by Thayer & Eldridge. In 1861 he had obtained a comfortable clerkship in the Lighthouse Bureau under the new Lincoln administration.

Whitman had already made his acquaintance in Bos-

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 53.
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 511, 512; Howells, *op. cit.*

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n, and their friendship now became most cordial and timate. Generous and romantic in his view of life, 'Connor's whole personality was very attractive to Whitman from the day of their first encounter. He had e warm Irish temperament which Walt loved; he was natural actor, and Walt was always at home with tors.[1] Moreover, he was an eager and intelligent lmirer of *Leaves of Grass;* and his keen insight, wide ading and remarkable powers of elocution sometimes vealed to their author meanings and suggestions in s own familiar words of which he himself had been nconscious. O'Connor's personal attachment to and verence for the older man is evident upon every page f *The Carpenter*, a tale which he afterwards contriuted to *Putnam's Magazine;*[2] while in the impassioned ulogium of *The Good Gray Poet* he has expressed his dmiration for the *Leaves*.

Upon politics however the two friends never agreed, nd, unfortunately, O'Connor was always eager for politial argument. He was a friend of Wendell Phillips, at anti-slavery orator who once described Lincoln as the slave-hound of Illinois," because the latter approved ne enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law while it emained on the statute-book: and to O'Connor, comulsory emancipation always came before the preservaon of the Union. This of course was not Whitman's iew, and it was upon the negro question that their riendship finally suffered shipwreck.[3]

O'Connor's rooms soon became the centre of an interesting group of literary friends. Mr. Eldridge, the ublisher,[4] came to Washington after the wreck of his Boston business, and a little later Mr. John Burroughs,[5] student of Wordsworth, Emerson and the *Leaves*, eing attracted to the capital, whither all eyes were urning, gave up teaching in New England, and obained a Government clerkship. Mr. E. C. Steadman,[6] poet and journalist in those days, and a clerk in the

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 518, 519; MSS. Traubel. [2] See *infra*, 227.
[3] See *infra*, 236. [4] *Wound-Dresser*, 128; Bucke, 39, 40.
[5] Bucke, 12. [6] *Wound-Dresser*, 133.

Attorney-General's department, was of the O'Connor group; and Mr. Hubley Ashton[1] also, then a rising young lawyer, who afterwards intervened successfully on Whitman's behalf at a critical moment.

The last-named of these gentlemen tells me that he first saw Whitman late one evening at the rooms of their mutual friend. It was indeed past midnight when Walt appeared asking for supper. He was wearing army boots, his sleeves were rolled up, and his coat was slung across his arm. He had just come in with a train-load of wounded from the front, and had been disposing of his charges in the Washington hospitals. Very picturesque he looked, as he stood there, stalwart, unconventional, majestic, an heroic American figure.

That figure rapidly became as familiar in Washington as it had been in New York.[2] No one could miss or mistake this great jolly-looking man, with his deliberate but swinging gait, his red face with its grey beard over the open collar, and crowned by the big slouch hat; and every one wondered who and what he might be. Some Western general, or sea-captain, or perhaps a Catholic Father, they would guess;[3] for he seemed a leader of men, and there was a freshness about his presence that surely must have come either from the prairies, the great deep, or the very heart of humanity. He had the bearing, too, of a man of action; he looked as though he could handle the ribbons, or swing an axe with the best, as indeed he could.

Whitman was more puzzled than any of the onlookers about his occupation, or rather his business. Occupation he never lacked while the hospitals were full; but for years he was very poor, and once, at least, seriously in debt.[4] The need for money, to supply the little extras which might save the life of many a poor fellow in the wards, was constant; and now, probably for the first time, he found it difficult to earn his own liveli-

[1] Calamus, 23, 24, etc. [2] Bucke, 99. [3] *Ib.*, 37.
[4] *Wound-Dresser*, 52

hood. He had failed in his application for a Government clerkship. Living in Washington was in itself costly, and the paragraphs and letters which he contributed to the local and metropolitan press, with his two or three hours a day of copying in the paymaster's office—a pleasant top-room overlooking the city and the river—brought him but a meagre income.

Moreover the need for money began to press in a new direction; for first, the family breadwinner at Brooklyn was threatened, and then, though he was not drawn for the army, his salary was cut in two.[1] Whereupon brother Andrew, always one suspects rather a poor tool, fell ill; and died after a lingering malady,[2] leaving a widow and several little children in poverty.

Walt himself lived in the strictest simplicity. For awhile, as we have seen, he boarded with the O'Connors; then he took a little room on a top-floor;[3] breakfasted on tea and bread, toasted before an oil-stove, and had for his one solid meal a shilling dinner at a cheap restaurant. To all appearance he was in magnificent health. At the beginning of the first summer he is so large and well, as he playfully tells his mother, that he looks "like a great wild buffalo, with much hair".[4] Simplicity of life was never a hardship to him. There was something wild and elemental in his nature that chose a den rather than a parlour or a club-room for its shelter.

The money difficulty renewed his thoughts of lecturing, and after the first summer in Washington his home-letters often refer to it.[5] But the plan now appears less as an apostolate than as a means of raising funds for his hospital service. The change may, of course, be due in part to the fact that he was writing of his plans to his old mother, who would be most likely to appreciate this motive; but it was chiefly the result of his present complete absorption in those immediate tasks of comradeship for which he seemed to be born.

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 133. [2] *Ib.*, 64, etc. [3] Trowbridge, *op. cit.*
[4] *Wound-Dresser*, 66. [5] *Ib.*, 84.

He was, however, well advised not to actually attempt the enterprise. Even a famous orator could hardly have found a hearing during the crisis of the war, when the newspaper with its casualty lists was almost the sole centre of interest. And even had he been sure of success, his hospital service would not have let him go.

During this first summer Whitman hurt his hand, and had to avoid some of the worst cases in order to escape blood-poisoning;[1] but in September he wrote home: "I am first-rate in health, so much better than a month or two ago: my hand has entirely healed. I go to hospital every day or night. I believe no men ever loved each other as I and some of these poor wounded sick and dying men love each other."[2] Such words are a fitting commentary upon the pages of Calamus. Here, among the perishing, the genius of this great comrade of young men found its proper work of redemption.

Great, indeed, was his opportunity. The federal city was full of troops and of wounded soldiers. The whole of the district a few blocks north of Pennsylvania Avenue, and of that lying east of the Capitol, were alike occupied by parade grounds, camps and hospitals. The latter even invaded the Capitol itself; and for a time the present Hall of Statuary was used as a ward.[3] Midway between the Capitol and the present Washington Monument, and close to the Baltimore and Potomac railway station, is the site of the Armory Square Hospital; four blocks to the north again is the Patent Office, for a long time filled with beds. And hard by, in Judiciary Square, where the hideous Pension Office now stands, was another great camp of the "boys in white". Whitman was a frequent visitor at all of these.

There were fourteen large hospitals in the city by the summer of 1863; and the total number in and

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 98. [2] *Ib.*, iii.
[3] S. D. Wyeth's *The Federal City*, 1868.

about it rose to fifty. They spread away over the surrounding fields and hill-sides, as far as the Fairfax Seminary[1] on the ridge above the quaint Washingtonian town of Alexandria. This was almost in the enemy's country. And even the melancholy strains of the Dead March were welcomed with covert rejoicings by its citizens when the funeral of some Union soldier passed their doors.[2] All through the war Washington itself was full of disaffected persons; and for a while, looking out from the height of the Capitol, one could see the Confederate flag flying on the Virginian hills opposite.

The greater part of the hospital nursing was done, of course, by orderlies; and a more or less severe and mechanical officialism prevailed in most of the wards. But this frigid atmosphere was warmed by the presence of a number of women; emissaries of Relief Associations supported by individual States, or of the Sanitary and Christian Commissions. It is difficult to overestimate the good that was done by Dorothea Dix and her helpers, among whom were not a few Quakeresses; and by all the devoted Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Charity whose goodwill never failed.

But even then the field for service was so vast that much remained undone. Many of the doctors and surgeons were able and kindly, some of them were absolutely devoted to their painful labours; and many of the nurses were more than patient and faithful; but the lads who were carried in wounded and sick from the cold and ghastly fields, wanted the strong support of manly understanding and prodigal affection in fuller measure than mere humanity seemed able to give.[3] Human as he was, Walt came to hundreds, perhaps thousands of them, like a Saviour. In after years they remembered "a man with the face of an angel" who had devoted himself to their individual needs.[4]

The mere presence of a perfectly sane and radiant personality raised the tone of a whole ward.[5] The dead-

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 40, 41.
[2] J. S. Wheelock's *The Boys in White*, 1870.
[3] *Wound-Dresser*, 7. [4] Bucke, 37. [5] *Wound-Dresser*, 28.

weight of cloudy depression brooding upon it would melt in the ineffable sunshine that streamed from him. And then he always seemed to know exactly what was wanted, and he was never in a hurry. When anything was to be done or altered, he spoke with the authority of the man who alone, among overpressed and busy people, has the leisure for personal investigation; and therefore in most cases he had his way.

Absolutely unsparing of himself, he knew too well wherein his strength lay to be careless of his health. If his food was sometimes insufficient, he would yet take his one square meal,[1] after refreshing himself with a bath, before starting upon his rounds. And when they were over, he cleared his brain under the stars before he turned in to sleep. Thus he kept his power at the full, and his presence was like that of the open air. He would often come into the wards carrying wild flowers newly picked, and strewing them over the beds, like a herald of the summer. Well did he know that they were messengers of life to the sick, words to them from the Earth-mother of men.

Whatever he might be in the literary world of Washington or New York, here Whitman was nothing but Walt the comrade of soldiers. And for himself, he said in later years, that the supreme loves of his life had been for his mother and for the wounded.[2] It is a saying worthy of remembrance, for it indicates the man.

Of the efficiency of his service there can be no question.[3] He worked his own miracles. He knew it positively himself, and besides, both the lads and the doctors assured him, time and again, that he was saving lives by refusing to give them over to despair. "I can testify," he writes to *The Brooklyn Eagle*, his old paper, "that friendship has literally cured a fever, and the medicine of daily affection a bad wound."[4] In his own words, he distributed himself,[5] as well as the contents of his pockets and haversack, in infinitesimal quantities, cer-

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 32. [2] *In re*, 391.
[3] *Wound-Dresser*, 8, 89, 113; Bucke, 36.
[4] *Wound-Dresser*, 14. [5] *Ib.*, 12.

tain that but little of his giving would be wasted. And yet he never gave indiscriminately;[1] he knew always what he was doing, and did it with deliberation.

The feeling that the lads wanted him had detained him at the first; the superabundance of his life, and the fulness of his health and spirits, carrying with them a conviction of duty when he entered these vestibules of death.[2] Here was something that he, and he only, could adequately accomplish; here was a cry he was bound by the law of his being to answer; and the cry of the hospitals continued to hold him till the war was done. As he left of a night, after going his last round and kissing many a young, pale, bearded face, in fulfilment of his own written injunctions, he would hear the boys calling, "Walt, Walt, Walt! come again, come again!" And it would have required a harder heart than his to refuse them, even had the answer within been less loud and insistent.

They kept him busy, too. He provided them with pens, stamps, envelopes and paper, and wrote their letters for them;[3] letters to mothers, wives and sweethearts; and the last news of all, when the sad procession had carried son, husband or lover to his soldier's grave, and had fired over him the last salute. He would enter, armed with newspapers and magazines which he distributed; and often he would read to the men, or recite some suitable verses, never, I think, his own.[4] He played games with them, too; and though he was one of the few men in Washington who never smoked,[5] he was the only one of all the visitors who brought them tobacco; and the ward-surgeons, though at first they protested, could not refuse him; it really seemed as though Walt knew best. On the glorious Fourth, he would provide a feast of ice-cream for some ward;[6] and on other hot days—and there were too many in the capital—would distribute the contents of crates full of oranges,[7] or lemons and sugar for the making of lemonade.

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 32, 33. [2] Camden, ix., 200.
[3] *Wound-Dresser*, 13. [4] *Ib.*, 42. [5] *Ib.*, 13; Calamus, 24.
[6] *Wound-Dresser*, 39. [7] *Ib.*, 30, 31.

It was for such gifts as these, and many others of a similar kind, that he needed money; and through the influence of Emerson, James Redpath and other friends in New York and Boston, he was able to distribute perhaps £1,200 among the soldiers in these infinitesimal quantities.[1] Thus he became the almoner of many in the North.

Much of the service, however, was entirely his own—if one can ever call love one's own, which all things seem to offer to the soul that has learnt to receive from all. In cases of heart sickness, and the despondency and despair that come to the lonely man lying helpless among callous or unimaginative and therefore indifferent persons, Walt's quick divination of the real trouble made him the best of nurses; and he took care to remember all the cases that came under his notice, innumerable as they must have seemed.

He kept a strict record of his patients and their individual needs in little blood and tear-stained notebooks, many of which are still extant.[2] This is an additional proof of that concrete definiteness of observation which distinguishes his habit of mind from the love of merely nebulous generalisation of which he is sometimes accused. One is bound to respect the intuitions of a mind which has so large a grasp of detail.

Beginning characteristically with the Brooklyn lads whom he found scattered about the several hospitals, and who claimed his attention by the natural right of old acquaintanceship, his work grew like a rolling snowball, as he made his way from bed to bed; for he was always quick to feel the needs of a stranger. Before long he realised that there was not one among the thousand tents and wards in which he might not profitably have expended his whole vital energy. As it was, however, he tramped from hospital to hospital, faithfully going his rounds as far afield as the Fairfax Seminary. And in those days the Washington streets were heavy walking in the wet weather; for Pennsyl-

[1] Donaldson, 153; *Comp. Prose*, 51. [2] *Mem. During the War*, 3.

vania Avenue was the only one that was yet paved,[1] and then boasted nothing but the cobble-stones, which still serve in the quaint streets across the Potomac.

He walked a great deal. The open air relieved the tension of the wards, which at times was almost unbearable. Though his presence and affection saved many a lad's life, there must have been many more that died; and the tragedy of these deaths, and the terrible suffering that often preceded them, bit into his soul.

Fascinated though he was by his employment, and delighting in it while he was strong and well,[2] the strength of his great heart was often as helpless as a little child's; and his whole nature staggered under the blows, which he felt even in his physical frame. He was literally an "amateur"; he could never take a detached or "professional" attitude towards his patients, for he knew that what they needed from him was love; their suffering became his suffering, and something died in him when they died.

The following passage, written when the war itself was drawing to a close, indicates the character of much of his work, and the spirit in which it was done:—

"The large ward I am in is used for secession soldiers exclusively. One man, about forty years of age, emaciated with diarrhœa, I was attracted to, as he lay with his eyes turned up, looking like death. His weakness was so extreme that it took a minute or so every time for him to talk with anything like consecutive meaning; yet he was evidently a man of good intelligence and education. As I said anything, he would lie a moment perfectly still, then, with closed eyes, answer in a low, very slow voice, quite correct and sensible, but in a way and tone that wrung my heart. He had a mother, wife and child, living (or probably living) in his home in Mississippi. It was long, long since he had seen them. Had he caused a letter to be sent them

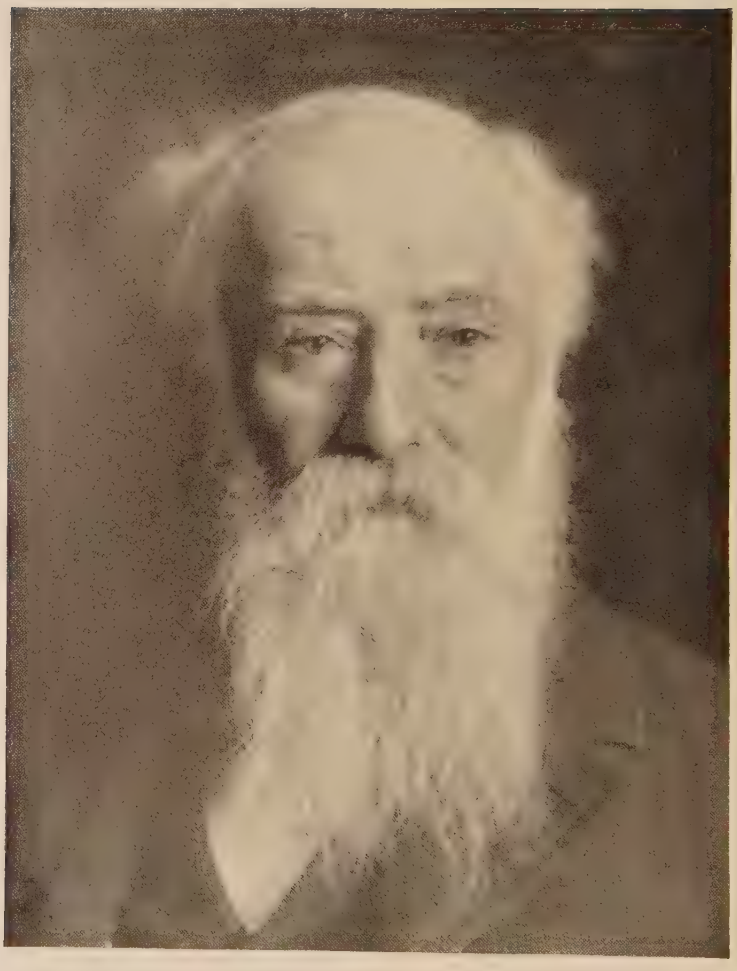
[1] *Recollections of Washn. in War Time*, A. G. Riddle, 1895.
[2] *Wound-Dresser*, 74, 84.

since he got here in Washington? No answer. I repeated the question very slowly and soothingly. He could not tell whether he had or not—things of late seemed to him like a dream. After waiting a moment, I said: 'Well, I am going to walk down the ward a moment, and when I come back you can tell me. If you have not written, I will sit down and write.' A few minutes after I returned; he said he remembered now that some one had written for him two or three days before. The presence of this man impressed me profoundly. The flesh was all sunken on face and arms; the eyes low in their sockets and glassy, and with purple rings around them. Two or three great tears silently flowed out from the eyes, and rolled down his temples (he was doubtless unused to be spoken to as I was speaking to him). Sickness, imprisonment, exhaustion, etc., had conquered the body, yet the mind held mastery still, and called even wandering remembrance back."[1]

At times the tragedy unnerved him, so that even his native optimism was clouded. "I believe there is not much but trouble in this world," we find him writing to his mother, and the page hardly reads like one of his; "if one hasn't any for himself, he has it made up by having it brought close to him through others, and that is sometimes worse than to have it touch oneself."[2] He had already learnt the primer of sorrow; now he was studying the lore in which he was to become so deeply read.

Even that first summer the malarial climate and excessive heat of Washington, with the close watching in the wards, and the continual draught upon his vital forces, affected him perceptibly. In his letters home he mentions heavy colds, with deafness and trouble in his head caused by the awful heat,[3] as giving him some anxiety. He seems to have had a slight sun-stroke in earlier years, which made him more susceptible to this

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 453, 454. [2] *Ib.*, 104. [3] *Wound-Dresser*, 62, etc.



JOHN BURROUGHS AT SIXTY-THREE

kind of weakness; and on hot days he went armed with a big umbrella and a fan.[1] But through all this time he seemed to his friends the very incarnation of his "robust soul".

Though he shuddered sometimes as he recalled the sights of the wards, the life outside was a pleasant one.[2] He loved to take long midnight rambles about the city and over the surrounding hills, with his friends. In spring, he delighted in the bird-song, the colour and fragrance of the flowers which lined the banks of Rock Creek,[3] a stream which, entering the broad Potomac a mile above the Treasury building, separated Washington from the narrow ivy-clad streets of suburban Georgetown.

And the stir and life of the capital always interested him. He loved to watch the marching of the troops; and the martial music and flying colours always delighted him as though he were a boy. He frequently met the President,[4] blanched and worn with anxiety and sorrow, riding in from his breezier lodging at the Soldiers' Home on the north side of the city, to his official residence. They would exchange the salutations of street acquaintances, each man admiring the patent manliness of the other.

In Washington, as in New York, Whitman was speedily making himself at home with everybody; eating melons in the street with a countryman,[5] or chatting at the Capitol with a member of Congress; for men or women, black or white, he always had his own friendly word. He had besides, as we have seen, his inner circle at O'Connor's.

He was often at the Capitol, that noble, but somewhat uninteresting building which overlooks the city; and if he deplored the low level of the Congressional debates, he found some compensation among the trees without; for fine trees were already a feature of Washington,[6] which now appears, as one looks down upon it,

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 79. [2] *Ib.*, 123; *Comp. Prose*, 70.
[3] Dr. T. Proctor in *Journal of Hygiene*, Feb., 1898.
[4] *Comp. Prose*, 38. [5] Calamus, 31. [6] *Wound-Dresser*, 112.

like a city builded in a wood. About sundown, too, he liked to stand where he could see the level light blazing like a star upon the bronze figure of Liberty, newly mounted above the dome.

It was in the summer of 1864, when Whitman was forty-five years of age, that he had his first serious illness. He had never been really out of health before. The preceding autumn he had paid a short visit to his home, and in February had gone down to the front at Culpepper, thinking that his services might be needed nearer to the actual scene of battle. But he found that he could do better work in Washington. The cases there seemed to grow more desperate as the long strain of the war made itself felt upon the men in the ranks.

It was immediately after this that Grant was given the supreme command; and at the close of March, Whitman, who foresaw the real meaning of the task of crushing Lee, wrote of it thus: "O mother, to think that we are to have here soon what I have seen so many times; the awful loads and trains and boat-loads of poor, bloody and pale, and wounded young men again. . . . I see all the little signs—getting ready in the hospitals, etc. It is dreadful when one thinks about it. I sometimes think over the sights I have myself seen: the arrival of the wounded after a battle; and the scenes on the field too; and I can hardly believe my own recollections. What an awful thing war is! Mother, it seems not men, but a lot of devils and butchers, butchering one another."[1]

A week later, describing the frightful sufferings of the soldiers, and the callous selfishness of their attendants, he says: "I get almost frightened at the world".[2] Again, two days after: "I have been in the midst of suffering and death for two months, worse than ever. The only comfort is that I have been the cause of some beams of sunshine upon their suffering and gloomy souls and bodies too."[3] And he adds: "Oh, it is terrible, and getting worse, worse, worse".[4]

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 156, 157. [2] *Ib.*, 159. [3] *Ib.*, 160. [4] *Ib.*, 161.

Rumours spread in the city of the probable character of Grant's campaign; and as he realised more and more fully what would be its inevitable cost, a sort of terror took hold of him. Yet he believed in Grant, as well as in Lincoln.[1] And hating war as he did, he could not see any other course possible now than to complete its work. He was solemnly ready to take his part in those ranks of men converted, as it were, into "devils and butchers," if need be, if he could feel assured that he was more use to America upon the field than in the wards among the sick and dying.

Meanwhile, he shared the old mother's anxiety about George, who was always in the thick of the fighting. News, both true and false, was arriving; and his letters are always seeking to support the old woman's faith, and to give her the plain truth with all the hope that might be.

He was kept very closely occupied now in the hospitals; and especially at Armory Square, where some 200 desperate cases were collected;[2] men who had lain on the field, or otherwise unattended, until their wounds and amputations had mortified. He had always made a rule of going where he was most needed. But now he began to suffer severely from what he describes as fulness in the head, to have fits of faintness, and to be troubled with sore throat.

To add to the horrors of those days, a number of the wounded lads went crazy; and at last the strain became so manifestly too much for his failing vitality, that his friends and the doctors bade him go North for a time. But he hung on still; hoping, like Grant, for the war to end with the summer, and writing to his mother that he cannot bear to leave and be absent if George should be hit and brought into Washington.[3] However, with midsummer upon him and its deadly heat, he became really ill, and had to relinquish his post. For nearly six months he remained restlessly at home.

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 139, etc. [2] *Ib.*, 37, etc. [3] *Ib.*, 198.

Whitman never fully recovered. We may perhaps be surprised at this, and wonder that he should have broken down, even under the circumstances. Was he not in such relations with the Universal Life that he should daily have been able to replenish the storehouse of his physical and emotional forces?

He was no spendthrift, and husbanded them as well as he might, knowing their value; and doubtless he asked himself this very question many a time. Doubtless, too, he was confident, at least during the earlier months, that after the strain was over his resilient nature would regain its normal tone. But on the other hand, he had volunteered for a service to whose claims he was ready to respond to the uttermost farthing.[1] Where others gave their lives, who was he to hold back anything of his?

The soul, one may say, never gives more than it can afford; for the soul is divinely prudent, and knows the worthlessness of such a gift. And giving with that prudence, it never seeks repayment; what it gives, it gives. But the body, even at its best, is not as the soul. And when the soul gives the vital and emotional forces of its body to invigorate other bodies, it may give more of these, and more continuously, than the body can replace. And so it was with Whitman. He gave, and I think he gave deliberately, for he was an extraordinarily deliberate man, that for which he cared far more than life; he gave his health to the friends, the strangers, whom he loved; and thus his "spiritualised body"[2] found its use.

[1] Bucke, 38, 39. [2] *Supra*, 181.

CHAPTER XIII

A WASHINGTON CLERK

WHILE Whitman was at home, during the latter part of 1864, he doubtless put the finishing touches to *Drum-taps*, which was printed at New York early in the following summer. Several of the poems in this collection had been written in that city during the two years which had elapsed since the last publication of *Leaves of Grass*, before he set out for Washington. The manuscript had remained at home, tied up in its square, spotted, stone-colour covers,[1] but was sent on to him, to be discussed in the Washington circle. Early in 1864 a friend seems to have taken it the round of the Boston publishers, but without success.[2]

If we are to understand Whitman's attitude towards the war, we must glance at the little brown volume of seventy-two pages, *Walt Whitman's Drum-taps*. Among the poems which preceded his visit to the capital were probably the song of "Pioneers,"[3] with its cry of the West, and the poem of the "Broadway Pageant,"[4] of 1860, celebrating the Japanese Embassy, and forming a complementary tribute to the maternal East. To these one may add the lines to "Old Ireland"[5] and the noble "Years of the Modern".[6]

In this last he proclaims the growing consciousness of solidarity among the peoples of the world. Artificial boundaries seem to be breaking down in Europe, and the people are making their own landmarks—witness

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 61. [2] Trowbridge, *op. cit.*
[3] *L. of G.*, 183. [4] *Ib.*, 193. [5] *Ib.*, 284. [6] *Ib.*, 370.

the rise of a new Italy. Everywhere men among the people are awaking to ask pregnant questions, and to link all lands together with steam and electricity.

Are all nations communing? Is there going to be but one heart to the globe?
Is humanity forming en-masse? for lo, tyrants tremble, crowns grow dim,
The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general divine war,
No one knows what will happen next, such portents fill the days and nights;
Years prophetical! the space ahead as I walk, as I vainly try to pierce it, is full of phantoms,
Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes around me,
This incredible rush and heat, this strange ecstatic fever of dreams, O years!
Your dreams, O years, how they penetrate through me! (I know not whether I sleep or wake);
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in shadow behind me,
The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance, advance upon me.[1]

The war poems follow.

Whitman's attitude towards war is not obvious, but it is, I believe, logical and consistent. On one side it approximated to the Quaker position, but only on one side. Or rather, perhaps, the Quaker position approximates to one side of Whitman's. He was devoted to a social order, or republic, which could not be realised by deeds of arms. He had no hatred for any of his fellows, and recognised in his political enemy a man divine as himself—one cannot say that he had any personal enemies, though there were men who would like to have been accounted such.

The fat years of peace had, however, awakened doubts in him of the average American's capacity for great passions.[2] These seemed to be rare among them, and Whitman had been driven to seek them in nature and her storms. It was with exultation, then, that he felt the response of New York and of the whole of America to the call of the trumpet.[3]

Men of peace are accustomed to lament the contagion

[1] *L. of G.*, 371. [2] *Ib.*, 228. [3] *Ib.*, 220.

ff the war-fever, and with a large measure of justice. But so long as civilisation tends to render the common ves of men cheap or calculating, there will remain a ivine necessity for those hours of fierce enthusiasm vhich, like a forest fire or religious revival, sweep irre-istibly over a nation. Whitman shared the rhythmic nswer of the blood, and of the soul which is involved herewith, to the imperious throbbing of the drums.[1] He knew that it represented in some, perhaps barbaric, way the throbbing of the nation's heart, and that the ry "To Arms!" called forth much that was best in nen.

The call to arms is one thing; the actual fighting, which converts men, to use his own phrase, into 'devils and butchers," is another. The call to arms awakes something in a man more heroic than the life he ordinarily lives; he seems to hear in it the voice of the Nation calling him by name, and when he answers he feels the joy of the Nation in his heart. He becomes consciously one with a great host in the hour of peril. He hears the voice of a Cause in the bugles and the drums. He shares in a new emotion, which is his glory because it is not his alone. He finds a fuller liberty than he has ever known in the discipline of the ranks; he accepts the petty tyrannies to which he is subjected, feeling that behind the officers is the will of the Nation to which he has yielded his own.

This, for better and worse, we may call the mysticism of war, and it appealed forcibly to Whitman. For him, war was illuminated by the idea of solidarity; an idea which was constantly present to him from this time forward. He no longer saw the great personalities only, nor only their divine comradeship in the life of God; all that remained as vivid as of old; but now he was being constantly reminded of the way in which individuals share consciously in the life of the nation; and this suggested to him how, presently, they will come to be conscious of their part in the life of the Race.

[1] *L. of G.*, 222,

He recognised how essential was the sense of citizenship to fuller soul-life. The barriers in which our individual lives are isolated must be broken, if liberty is to be brought to the soul. If we are to live fully, we must feel the tides of being sweep through our emotional natures. Hence his welcome to war, which, in spite of all the fiendish spirits which follow in its wake, does thrill a chord of national consciousness in the individual heart.

We may well ask whether there is no errand worthier of this sense of solidarity than that of slaughter. Surely the affirmation of such an errand underlies the whole thought of *Drum-taps*, with its call to a "divine war".[1]

The hour has come when the Social Passion is about to rouse the peoples to a nobler crusade against oppression than any yet; when the nations shall be purged by revolutions wholesomer than those of 1789 or 1861. Whitman's whole life, throbbing in every page he wrote, proclaims it.

He regarded the Civil War as a sort of fever in the body politic, caused by anterior conditions of congestion. War had become necessary for the life of that body, and only after a war could health re-assert itself. To compromise continually, as we boast in England that we do, may sustain a sort of social peace, but it is almost certain to drive the disease deeper into the very heart of our national life, and there to sap the sheer ability for any kind of noble enthusiasm. You may purchase a sort of peace with the price of a life more sacred than even that of individual citizens. Whitman demanded national health, without which he could see no real peace.

He did not suppose, indeed, that war could of itself

[1] *Cf.* "I, too . . . also sing war, and a longer and greater one than any,
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,
(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last), the field the world,
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
I above all promote brave soldiers." —*L. of G.*, 9, 10.

effect a cure. Health could only return in so far as the aroused conscience of the nation—which had lived in its soldiers and in the wives and families who had shared in their devotion—was carried forward into the civil life. Peace itself must be rendered sentient of that heroic national purpose which had for a moment flashed across the fields of battle.[1] Peace, indeed, is only priceless when it has become more truly and wisely heroical than war; when it has become affirmative where war is cruelly negative; when it creates where war destroys, quickening the heart of each citizen to fulfil a sacred duty.

Whitman well knew that in order to have such a peace we must set before the peoples a mission, a sublime national task. What party is there to-day, either in England or America, which dares to hold up for achievement any programme of heroism?

Read in this light, and only so, I believe, will *Drum-taps* yield up its essential meaning. It is a Song of the Broad-axe, not a scream of the war-eagle.[2]

In alluding to *Drum-taps*, I have somewhat anticipated the natural course of the story, to which we must now return. Even at home on furlough, Whitman could not wholly relinquish the occupation which he had assumed, and became a frequent visitor at the hospitals of Brooklyn and New York.

Early in December, 1864, he was back again at his post, suffering from the added anxiety for his brother's welfare; for George was a prisoner in the hands of the Confederates, enduring the almost inconceivable horrors of a winter imprisonment at Dannville. At the beginning of February Walt made an application to General Grant, through a friend in the office of the *New York Times*,[3] for the release of his brother, together with another officer of the 51st New York Volunteers; alleging, as an urgent reason, the deep distress of his aged mother whose health

[1] *L. of G.*, 276, 278. [2] Camden, iii., 160, 161.
[3] Facsimile in Williamson's *Catalogue*.

was breaking. The application appears to have been successful, and George, who had been captured early in the preceding summer, and upon whom fever, starvation, exposure and cold had wreaked their worst for many months, returned alive to Brooklyn, his excellent constitution triumphant over all hardships.

In the same month Whitman obtained a clerkship in the Indian Bureau of the Department of the Interior, and thoroughly enjoyed the contact into which he was thus brought with the aboriginal Americans. They on their side appear to have distinguished him as a real man among the host of colourless officials, and to have responded to his advances.[1]

This was the early spring of Lincoln's death; and Walt was at the President's last levee.[2] He looked in also at the Inauguration Ball held in the Patent Office —strangely converted from its recent uses as a hospital. There he remarked the worn and weary expression of the beloved brown face; for still the great tragedy dragged on.

Five or six weeks later, a young Irish-Virginian, one of Walt's Washington friends,[3] was up in the second gallery of the crowded theatre upon the tragic night of the assassination, and saw the whole action passing before his bewildered eyes. Whitman was at home again in Brooklyn: seeing George, we may presume, and making final arrangements for his *Drum-taps;* on his return he seems to have heard the whole graphic story from his friend.

It is doubtful whether Whitman and the dead President had ever spoken to one another, beyond the ordinary greeting of street acquaintances. They had met perhaps a score of times, and it is recorded that once, when Walt passed the President's window, Lincoln had remarked significantly—"Well, *he* looks like a man".[4] It seems possible that at first Whitman may have felt something of the public uncertainty about the character of the new President.[5]

[1] *In re*, 383; *Comp. Prose*, 411-13. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 59.
[3] Calamus, 25. [4] Bucke, 42. [5] *Wound-Dresser*, 139.

How deep-rooted in the average American mind was ıe distrust or dislike of his policy is seen in the fact ıat, only six months before the death that was mourned ⁻ the whole nation, the opposition to his re-election ıas represented by a formidable popular vote. The outh was in revolt, and therefore of course disfran-ıised; but even so, McClellan polled as large a total s had the President at the previous election; though incoln himself increased his former vote by a little ıore than one-fifth. So strong ran popular feeling gainst the whole policy of interference with the seced-ıg States even in the fourth year of the war.

But Lincoln's death revealed his true worth to merica. And the sense of the almost sacramental ature of that death, as sealing for ever the million thers of the war, and finally consecrating the re-stablished union of North and South, grew upon Whitman, who long before had realised that Lincoln as the father of his country and the captain of her ourse.

A sense of some impending tragedy seems to have ccompanied Whitman upon his walks at the time of he assassination. It was early spring and the lilac vas in blossom; a strange association, deeper than nere fancy,[1] seemed to the poet to establish itself etween the scent of the lilac, the solitary night-song f the hermit-thrush, the fulness of the evening star at his time, and the passing of "the sweetest, wisest soul f all my days and lands". It was out of this deeply ealised association that he built up the mystical sym-hony which he afterwards called "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn," a poem in many respects similar to his ther great chant of death, "Out of the Cradle".

Mystical and symbolic, it is charged with a vast ıational emotion; and this gives a certain vagueness o its solemnity, better befitting its theme than a more oncrete treatment. The poet was not writing of "him love," but rather attempting to express the feeling of

[1] *L. of G.*, 255; *Comp. Prose*, 305.

lonely loss which thousands experienced on that dark April day. Hence his poem is the hymn of a nation's bereavement rather than the elegy of a great man dead. Whitman, in his attitude toward Lincoln, had come to regard him as an incarnation of America. He thought of him as he thought of the Flag; and his personal reverence for the man took almost the form of devotion to an ideal.

The President's death had been already noted in *Drum-taps*, but when he conceived the longer poem, Whitman seems to have recalled the edition,[1] in order to add this and certain other verses as a sequel, thus delaying its publication till about the end of the year.

Another of the new poems calls for a word in passing. "Chanting the Square Deific"[2] is an attempt to express his theory of ultimate reality, that is to say, of the soul. Four elements go to the making of this, and these he calls respectively, Jehovah, Christ, Satan and Santa Spirita—adopting, as he sometimes would, a formula of his own inventing, that was of no known language. In other words, he conceived of the soul's reality,[3] as characterised by four essential qualities; first, its obedience to the remorseless general laws of being; second, its capacity for attraction to and absorption into others—its love-quality; third, its lawless defiance of everything but its own will; fourth, its sense of identity with the whole.

Condemnation, compassion, defiance, harmony, these he says are final and essential qualities of the Divine; only as they are united can our idea of God or of the Soul, which is the Son of God, be complete. In the traditional Satan of revolt and pride, he saw an element without which the harmony was immaterial and unreal. Evil and perilous in itself, in its relation to the rest it is the solid ballast of the soaring soul. In this, he

[1] *L. of G.*, 263; *cf.* (1865); *cf.* Calamus, 35 n. [2] *L. of G.*, 339.
[3] *Cf.* W. N. Guthrie's *W. W. as Religious and Moral Teacher* (1897), 80 n.; Symonds, 26.

uggests much of the attitude which Nietzsche was fterwards to make his own.

During the composition of some of these poems a risis occurred in his new official career. The war was ver, but the hospitals still were full, and Walt was busy here as usual in his leisure hours; and at his desk in he Indian Bureau, whenever his duties were not press- ig, he was at work upon his manuscripts,[1] when some ostile fellow-clerk seems to have called the attention f the newly appointed chief of the department to the haracter of these private documents.

Whitman had been a favourite with the chief clerk n the bureau, and had been given a good deal of lati- ude; perhaps the hostile person had observed this with a jealous eye. The manuscript proved to be not he innocuous *Drum-taps*, but an annotated copy of *Leaves of Grass* preparing for a new edition. A reading f the volume decided the chief upon a prompt dismissal f its author, and this is not surprising when we remem- er that Mr. Harlan had been appointed through the ressure of the powerful Methodist interest which he ommanded. The Methodist eye in him must have egarded many of these pages with suspicion and not a ew with disgust.

The dismissal itself was perfectly colourless; it ran:—

"DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
"WASHINGTON, D.C., *June 30th*, 1865.

"The services of Walter Whitman, of New York, as a clerk in the Indian Office, will be dispensed with from and after this date.

"JAS. HARLAN,
"*Secretary of the Interior.*"[2]

It is obvious that the chief had no right to open his clerk's desk and examine what he knew to be private papers; but having done so, and being presumably of

[1] Bucke, 40-42, 73.
[2] MSS. Traubel; for a further attack see Burroughs (2), 123.

an unimaginative, narrowly pious and over-conscientious character, we cannot wonder at his action. From Whitman's point of view the matter was serious; he could ill-afford a peremptory dismissal from the public service. And to his friends the dismissal appeared not so much unjust as enormous.

O'Connor, hearing the news, went straight to Hubley Ashton, in the fiery heat of that generous and righteous wrath which scintillates and flashes with perfervid splendour through the pages of his *Good Grey Poet*.[1] Mr. Ashton was not so fierce, but he was indignant. He was a member of the Administration, and used his power to Whitman's advantage. Finding all remonstrance with Mr. Harlan to be vain, he yet induced him to make some sort of exchange by which Whitman was not actually dismissed from the service, but only transferred to his own department — the Attorney-General's.

Painful at the time, the affair did Whitman little injury. When Harlan's action became known it was far from popular in Washington, where every one knew Walt, and where next to nobody had read his *Leaves*. A section at least of the local press supported the claims of a fellow-pressman;[2] while in the Civil Service he was a favourite with the clerks. In literary circles, also, O'Connor's slashing attack upon the Secretary for the Interior turned the tables in Walt's favour.

In later years assaults of the same character were not infrequent, both upon *Leaves of Grass* and its author; but, however annoying, they always resulted in arousing curiosity, and thus in extending the circle of readers. Probably the fear of this consequence prevented their further multiplication, for average American opinion was then undisguisedly hostile, as, of course, it still remains.

On the whole, Whitman seems to have been happy in his new office. He never tired of the view from his

[1] Included in Bucke. [2] Potter, *op. cit.*; Bucke, 19.

window[1] in the second storey of the Treasury Building, overlooking miles of river reaches with white sails upon them, and the range of wooded Virginian hills. He liked his companions, and he relished the green tea which came in every afternoon from a girl in an adjacent office;[2] not, indeed, intended for him, but resigned to him by its recipient, who was scornful of the cup.

He went great walks, especially by night, and enjoyed his jaunts on the cars. One Thanksgiving Day we find him picnicing by the falls of the Potomac, and on another occasion he is visiting Washington's old mansion at Mount Vernon.[3] Every Sunday till the close of 1866 he was in the hospitals, and frequently called at one or other during the week. He was a regular visitor at the homes of several friends, and his acquaintance with Mr. Peter Doyle, which seems to have begun during the last winter of the war, had ripened into a close comradeship.

Mr. and Mrs. Burroughs had always to keep Sunday breakfast waiting for him; there was a regularity in his lateness.[4] After a chat with them, and a glance through the Sunday papers, he would stroll over to the office for his letters on his way to some hospital, and during the course of the afternoon he dropped in at the O'Connors' for tea. In the winter he spent much of his leisure by the fire in the comfortable Library of the Treasury Building reading novels, philosophy and what he would.

He boarded at a pleasant house on M Street, near Twelfth.[5] It stood back from the road, with a long sweep of sward in front of it, and an arbour under a great cherry tree, which became in spring a hill of snowy blossom. As the evenings grew warmer, Whitman and his fellow-boarders would draw their chairs out on to the grass and sit under the trees talking or silently watching the passers-by, or listening to occasional strolling players.

To his companions and to casual visitors he seemed

[1] Camden, viii., 188-91, etc. [2] *Ib.* [3] *Ib.*
[4] Johnston, 130-40; *cf.* Camden, viii., 220. [5] Potter.

as strong as ever. He ate well, avoiding excess, and, still adhering to his resolution, partaking but sparingly of meat. He went to bed and rose early. Always affable and courteous, he contrived to take his part in the general conversation without saying much.

Such a life was easy, and passably comfortable; he was earning a fair salary, and making new friends constantly. But he was without a home; and Washington, after all, as the seat of officialism, shows the seamy side of democracy. The cynic declares that its population consists exclusively of negroes, mean whites and officials; thus presenting a melancholy contrast to the metropolis of the fifties with its large class of vigorous-minded, independent artisans, the backbone of a city democracy as the yeoman-farmers are of a nation.

The routine also of the work he was doing must often have been irksome to him.[1] It is one of the enigmas of Whitman's life that he should have been content to continue in Washington six years at least after the hospitals had ceased to claim him; sitting before a Government desk as third clerk and earning his regular pay of rather more than three hundred pounds a year.[2] How great the change from his old Bohemian days! The question obtrudes, was Walt becoming "respectable"?

Whether he were or no, at least he had become noticeably better clad and less aggressive, a gentler seeming man than of old.[3] And yet there was always something illusive about this apparent change. He could still turn the face of a rock to impertinent intruders;[4] he could still blaze out in sudden anger upon a rare occasion.

But he was near fifty now, and for several years the strong sympathies of his nature had been fully and continually exercised in the wards. His individuality was as marked as ever; but with the war he had experienced a deeper sense of his membership in the life of the Race. The word "*en-masse*," now so often on his lips, expresses

[1] Camden, viii., 175.
[2] *Ib.*, 184.
[3] Potter; *Rossetti Papers*, 492.
[4] Calamus, 22.

his constant consciousness. It was not new to him, ut its dominance was new.

Again, while he had seen before that, in general, every oul is divine, it was the days and nights which he spent n the wards which made him understand how divine it ctually is. The meaning of love grows richer in its xercise, and this was doubtless true in the case of Walt Whitman.

The experience of recent years had cleansed his elf-assertion of qualities which were merely fortuitous. Never intentionally eccentric, he had previously perhaps xaggerated the traits which were peculiar to a stage n the development of his own personality. But the rucible heat of the wards rid him of that, while integrating his nature more perfectly. Living more intensely than ever, he was living more than ever in the lives of others; and this inevitably made him more catholic.

Other circumstances aided in the same direction. His manner of daily life had altered. He lived no longer among his own folk at home, but instead among professional men and clerks, at a middle-class Washington boarding-house. He worked now with a pen, not a hammer; and his book, written for the young American artisan, was being read and appreciated, not at all by him, but instead by students in Old and New England. He lost nothing of himself by becoming one of this other class in which for the time he lived with his book. A smaller man might have been seriously affected by such a change in environment; but while it could not be without effect upon Whitman, it never made him less true to his essential self.

In considering this period, I think we may say that the Whitman of the later sixties was still the large masculine man who wrote the first *Leaves of Grass;* but having in 1860 completed the first plan of the book, his task of self-assertion now became as it were a secondary matter. The suffering and sympathy of the war had developed the saviour in him; so that some of his portraits, taken at the time, have almost the air of a

"gentle shepherd". His message became increasingly one of helpful love, newly adjusted to the individuals among whom he was thrown.

And with the rise of a group of able young champions and admirers, it became more necessary that he should guard his message and himself from anything that could encourage that habit of personal imitation which would have created a group of little Whitmanites, whose very ability must have limited the original inspiration which had bound them to him.

Thus it was in a sense true that, after the publication of the volume of 1860, the first Whitman was, as he prophesied he would be, "disembodied, triumphant, dead".

So much on the matter of Whitman's increased respectability: as to his prolonged stay in Washington, something further must be said.

It is evident that he was no longer the Titan of old days. In the spring of 1867 he writes home that he is well, but "getting old";[1] and every year he seemed to feel the extremes of the Washington climate more and more. This is further evidence of decreasing vitality.

Had he returned to New York, it must probably have been to write for the press; and however physically robust he might suppose himself to be, something at least of the old force of initiative had left him. There was no longer any immediate need for his presence at home; for when Jeff went West to St. Louis, as engineer to the city waterworks, his brother George was there to take his place as the mother's main support.

Walt was, moreover, earning a sufficient income in an easy fashion. The work itself was light; he was trusted, and little supervised. His chief seems to have recognised that he had spent himself unsparingly for America in the hospitals, without immediate reward; and now, in consequence, allowed him to arrange his duties as suited him best. He spent but little of his

[1] Camden, viii.

income upon himself; though the penurious simplicity and discomfort of the early days was no longer desirable. He always sent something to his mother, and seems to have divided the remainder between any of his hospital boys who still lingered; the beggars whom he never refused; his friends, and the Savings Bank.

But one suspects that Whitman really stayed on in Washington for the same reason that he had previously remained in New York. He took root wherever he stood; and it required the tug of duty to remove him. Wherever he was, his life was full of incident and material for thought. Outward occupation or adventure counted for comparatively little in his experience. His present circumstances favoured the steady progress of his own writing and the prosecution of his friendships.

Not that he ever forgot his friends in the metropolis, or grew indifferent to the claims of his family. He contrived to spend at least a month every summer in his old haunts, living at home and making daily expeditions on the bay, bathing from the Coney Island beach, and sauntering along Broadway.[1] He often had business at the printers', for he was now again his own publisher.

The *Leaves* had been out of print since the failure of his Boston friends, and in 1867 he was working on a new edition, completing the very copy which had roused the wrath of Mr. Harlan. He seems to have spent a few days with his friend Mrs. Price;[2] and coming down late to tea one evening, after working on his manuscripts, one of the daughters has recorded the extraordinary brightness and elation of his mien. "An almost irrepressible joyousness," she says, "shone from his face and seemed to pervade his whole body. It was the more noticeable as his ordinary mood was one of quiet yet cheerful serenity. I knew he had been working at a new edition of his book, and I hoped if he had an opportunity he would say something to let us into the

[1] See Calamus.

[2] Bucke, 32; Miss Price gives date as 1866; the new ed. appeared late in 1867.

secret of his mysterious joy. Unfortunately, most of those at the table were occupied with some subject of conversation; at every pause I waited eagerly for him to speak; but no, some one else would begin again, until I grew almost wild with impatience and vexation. He appeared to listen, and would even laugh at some of the remarks that were made, yet he did not utter a single word during the meal; and his face still wore that singular brightness and delight, as though he had partaken of some divine elixir."

But it was not always in joy that he wrote. Other friends have told how they have noted him turning aside from the street into some door or alleyway to take out a slip of paper and write, with the tears running fast across his face.[1] Whether in tears or in ecstasy, it is certain that he composed his poems under the stress of actual feeling; and of emotions which shook his whole being and thrilled its heavy, slow-vibrating chords to music.

[1] Bucke, 171.

CHAPTER XIV

FRIENDS AND FAME

IN October, 1867, the new volume appeared; it was intended to replace the former final edition of 1860, and in itself was now regarded as final. Whitman wrote home to his mother that at last he had finished his re-arrangings and corrections, for good.[1] But he was mistaken; for because the book was a whole, every page which he added to it in succeeding years entailed a new revision of the rest. Each new note affects the old sequence, which thus requires to be ordered anew.

The book might be handsomer, he says; but he notes that he has omitted some excessive phrases, and even dropped a passage or two which had not stood the test of time; and now he feels that the volume proves itself to any fair-minded person. Beyond these alterations, the book contains little that is new.

That public interest in Whitman was increasing is shown by the appearance this year of the first of those brief biographical studies which have since become so numerous. It was from the pen of his intimate friend, Mr. John Burroughs, than whom none knew him better during the Washington days; and having besides the full advantage of Whitman's supervision, remains a principal authority to this day.[2]

Equally important was the preparation in England this autumn of a volume of selections by Mr. W. M. Rossetti.[3] The editor of the *Germ*, that most interesting expression of a new and pregnant spirit in art whose

[1] Camden, viii., 218.
[2] *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person*, 1867.
[3] *Poems of W. W.*, 1868.

brief but brilliant course had ended a few years before the first appearance of the *Leaves*, was the right man to introduce Walt Whitman to the English reader. Both he and his brother, the poet, had for several years been admirers of Whitman's work; and before the publication of the new edition he had written an able notice of the book in *The Chronicle*, a short-lived organ of advanced Catholic views.[1]

This was widely copied by the American press. It preserves a judicial tone, which while fully appreciating the literary value of the new work, is far from indiscriminate praise. Mr. Rossetti frankly protested against what he regarded as the gross treatment of gross things, not so much on ethical as on æsthetic grounds; against jarring words and faulty constructions. He noted the obscurity and fragmentary character of many passages, commented on the agglomerative or cataloguial habit, and upon the author's justifiable, but at first sight exasperating, self-assertion.

Much of this was, at least from its writer's literary point of view, just and valuable criticism. Mr. Rossetti was less fortunate when he asserted that if only he were brought down by sickness many things would appear very different to Whitman; for while the remark contains an incontestable element of axiomatic truth, its particular application was based upon a misapprehension of the poet's character. He conceived that Whitman's faith depended upon physical well-being—just as Walt once declared that Goethe's religion was founded simply upon good digestion and appetite—thus missing the spiritual basis of his personality.

But if Rossetti's literary criticisms are searching and upon the whole just, his praises are not less notable. *Leaves of Grass* he describes as by far the largest poetical performance of our period; and while acclaiming him the founder of American poetry, he foresees that its author's voice will one day be potential and magisterial wherever the English language is spoken.

[1] See also Preface to *Poems of W. W.*, and *Rossetti Papers*, 240.

The criticism was followed by the compilation of a volume of selections containing nearly one half of the current *Leaves of Grass*, and a large part of the original Preface of 1855. The enterprise brought the compiler into cordial personal relations with the poet.[1] There had at first been a slight misunderstanding as to the scope of the English version, and an expurgated but otherwise complete edition had been suggested. Whitman could not be a party to such a volume, and would naturally have preferred his own complete book to any selections. But in Mr. Rossetti he recognised an understanding friend. While frankly expressing his own views, he was most cordial and generous in the declaration of his faith in his correspondent's wisdom, and of his desire to leave him unshackled.

The selections contained none of the poems which had aroused the indignation of Mr. Harlan and his friends, and would probably have more than satisfied the very different criticisms of Emerson. Their publication established the foundation of Whitman's English fame, which now rapidly outstripped his American. Already known to the few—to such men for instance as Tennyson, Dante G. Rossetti, Swinburne, W. Bell Scott, J. A. Symonds and Thomas Dixon—*Leaves of Grass* was from this time eagerly sought after by a considerable number of the younger and more vigorous thinkers.

Although they never met, Whitman's friendship with Symonds is so important that I cannot pass it by without some reference to the younger man's character.[2] He had been, as is well known, an exceptionally brilliant Oxford scholar; who had shown so little trace of the disqualifying elements of genius that his painfully accurate poetic form carried off the Newdigate prize. After his studies at Balliol, he entered early manhood with impaired sight, an irritable brain and incipient consump-

[1] *Rossetti Papers*, 270, 287, etc.
[2] Symonds, 4; *J. A. Symonds, a Biography*, by H. R. F. Brown.

tion. His temper was naturally strenuous, but this quality was accompanied by introspective morbidity.

In the autumn of 1865, at the age of five and twenty,[1] the late Mr. Frederick Myers introduced him to *Leaves of Grass;* his reading of one of the Calamus poems—"Long I thought that knowledge alone would suffice me"[2]—from the edition of 1860, sending, as Symonds says, electric thrills through the very marrow of his bones. Whitman of course rode rough-shod over all the scholar's academic and aristocratic prejudices, and required slow assimilation. This process continued during the next four years; but he says that the book became eventually a more powerful formative influence in his life than Plato's works,[3] or indeed any other volume, save the Bible.

Married already, and already largely an invalid, life was full of difficulties for so keen and eager a mind; and the *Leaves* became his anchor, especially the poems of Calamus.[4] It was in 1869 and 1870[5] that he realised their full value.

Already his mind had responded to the idea of the cosmos and of cosmic enthusiasm,[6] suggested to it in the Hymn of Cleanthes, in certain pages of Marcus Aurelius, Giordano Bruno, Goethe, and the Evolutionists of his own time. To these ideas Whitman brought conviction and reality. It was through his study of the *Leaves* that Symonds came to understand for himself the infinite value and possibility of human comradeship, and became a glad participant in the Universal Life.

For twenty years the two men corresponded as close friends; and there were few in whose admiration for his work Whitman found such keen satisfaction. But Addington Symonds was always a conscientious as well as an affectionate and reverent friend; and while at a later date he publicly protested against Mr. Swinburne's assault,[7] and in his posthumous study of Whitman,

[1] Symonds, 158. [2] *Supra*, 133 n.
[3] *J. A. Symonds*, ii., 70; *Camden's Compliment*, 73.
[4] *J. A. Symonds*, ii., 15. [5] *Ib.*, ii., 82. [6] *Ib.*, ii., 130, 131.
[7] Symonds in *Fortnightly Rev.*, xlii., 459; A. C. S. in *ib.*, 170.

ANNE GILCHRIST

roved himself second to none in his admiration of him whom he called Master, yet he himself made some of he frankest and most trenchant criticisms of his friend's ork. He thus preserved his independence, and, unlike hat of the mere disciple, his praise of Whitman is endered really valuable by this quality.

In the summer of 1869, Mr. Madox Brown lent a copy f the *Selections* to his friend Mrs. Alexander Gilchrist, he widow of Blake's biographer. She responded to he book's appeal, and immediately borrowed Mr. Rossetti's copy of the complete volume.[1] While wholly pproving the omission from his *Selections* of such oems as the "Children of Adam," and herself making some partial reservation with regard to these as erhaps infringing in certain passages the natural law of oncealment and modesty, she expressed to Mr. Rossetti, n fervid and impassioned phrases, the joy that came to er in this new gospel, worthy at last as she thought of merica. Her friend obtained her permission to allow er letters to him to be published; and they appeared in he Boston *Radical* for May, 1870.

Her words of womanly understanding stirred Whitman oo deeply for much outward expression.[2] He hardly egarded them as a declaration of individual friendship, howing himself at the time even a little indifferent[3] to he personality of their writer. They were, he knew, testimony not so much to him as to his *Leaves of Grass*, which were a half-impersonal utterance, and as such e received them with gratitude.[4] Nothing, not even O'Connor's brilliant vindication, had so justified the oems to their maker.

Whitman has been roundly abused by Mr. Swinburne[5] nd others, because, as they say, he lacks the romantic ttitude toward woman. Mr. Meredith has shown in his wn inimitable way the fiends that mask themselves

[1] *Anne Gilchrist, Her Life and Writings*, by H. H. G., 1887; and *In re*, 41, 42.
[2] *Rossetti Papers*, 459, 460. [3] Bucke, 31. [4] *In re*, 72.
[5] *Fort. Rev., loc. cit.*

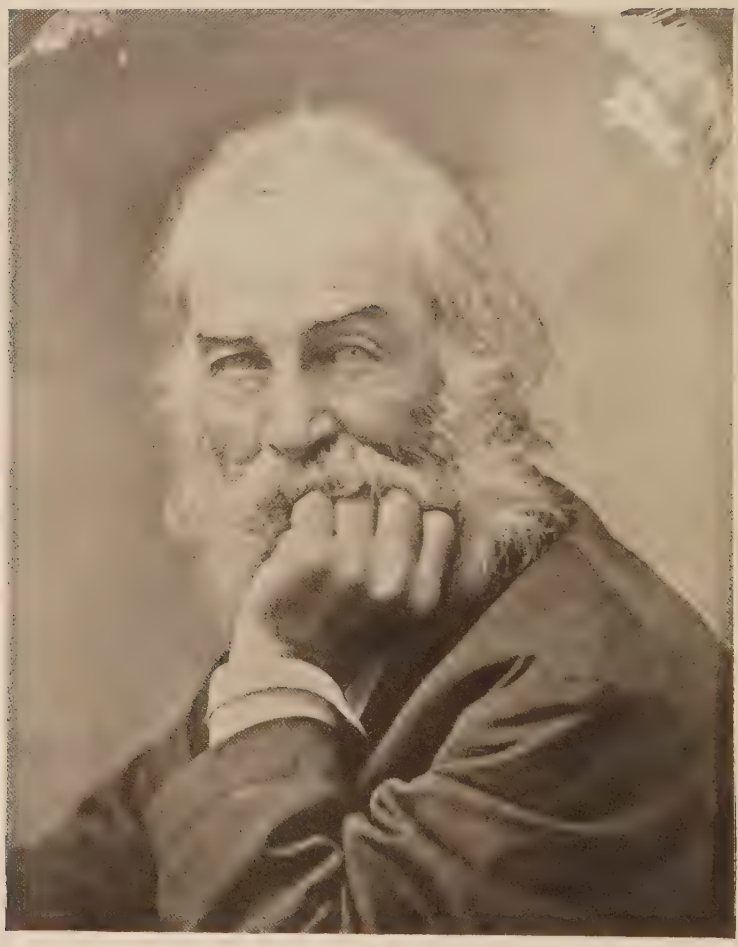
too often under this romantic mien; and one is not always sure whether Whitman's honesty is not in itself a little distasteful to some of his critics.

It is true that he has addressed woman as the mother or the equal mate of man, rather than as the maid unwed, as though his thought of sex transcended the limits usually assigned to it. I am persuaded that the explanation of this is to be found in the fact that Whitman's mystic consciousness had broken many of the barriers which have constricted the passion of sex too narrowly during past centuries. He heard all the deeps of life calling to one another and responding with passionate avowals of life's unity. The soul of the lover —as all the poets have been telling us since Dante's day —discovers its true self in the beloved person: but the soul of Whitman discovered itself as surely and as passionately in the Beloved World. The expression is so novel that it sounds well-nigh absurd to ears that do not "hear". But for those who can hear, Whitman's voice is all surcharged with the lover's passion; not less intense but larger in its sanity than the voices of other poets.

Again we may justly urge that, in general, it was Woman as Madonna, rather than as Venus, whom he contemplated. Or shall we say he saw the Madonna in Venus, as Botticelli did? His love, when he wrote, was that of a man of middle life, in whom the yearning tenderness of fatherhood mingled with the other currents of passion. His vision beheld the Divine Child, without whom love itself is incomplete. For fatherhood and motherhood are seen by the insight of the poet to be implicit in the passion of sex, and it was impossible for Whitman, the seer, to think of one apart from the other.

As a wife and a mother, Anne Gilchrist recognised the beauty and purity of Whitman's conception of love; and his book was to her like the presence of a great and wise comrade.[1] She was the first woman who had publicly recognised his purpose in these poems, and it was an act

[1] *In re*, 42.



WHITMAN AT ABOUT FIFTY

of no small heroism.[1] Whitman might well be moved by it.

The *Selections* had appeared in 1868, a year which also saw the publication[2] of O'Connor's tale, *The Carpenter*, in whose pages commences that legendary element in Whitman's story, which follows the advent of the more striking personalities. Here Whitman is confused with Christ, somewhat as was Francis by his followers, more than six centuries before.

That such a thing should have been possible in the Whitman circle requires a few words of explanation. I have already described the poem in which he himself claims comradeship with "the Crucified".[3] The further assertion of such a claim inevitably fell to O'Connor, whose work was always marked by an element of vehemence and even of excess. Brilliant, generous, eloquent, he was oftener a fervid partisan than a safe critic.

Having already coupled Whitman's name with the greatest in literature[4]—an act of audacity, even if we accept the conjunction—it was but natural that, finding the man himself nobler even than his works, he should compare him with the greatest masters of human life. He was not satisfied even with the praises he had piled upon his hero in his indignant rejoinder to the Hon. James Harlan.

O'Connor's tale is of no great value; but it reminds us that there was in Walt something which bewildered those who knew him best: something Jove-like says one;[5] something that, judged by ordinary standards, was superhuman, alike in its calm breadth of view and its capacity for love. They observed that what others might do under the constraint of exceptional influences, of intellectual conviction, moral ideal or religious enthusiasm, he did naturally. He did not rise to an occasion, but always embraced opportunity as though from a higher level. He was not shocked or alienated by

[1] See *infra*, 264. [2] In *Putnam's Magazine*, Jan., 1868.
[3] See *supra*, 167. [4] In the *Good Gray Poet*. [5] Burroughs, 85.

things which shocked other men; and personal slights and injuries hardly touched him, dropping from him at once. He was the best of comrades, and yet he was a man of deep reserve. And he was so many-sided that his friends were hardly aware that he concealed something of himself from them. Always when you met him again you found him bigger than you had remembered him; and the better you knew him, the less certain you would be of accurately forecasting his actions or understanding his thoughts.

If, however, we call him superhuman, it must be by an unusual manner of speech; for he was, as we know, the most human of men, seeming to be personally familiar and at home with every fragment of humanity. He comprehended the springs of action in individuals, as the soul comprehends the purpose of each limb and article of the body. He had the understanding which comes through a subtle sympathy with the whole of things.

Explain or ignore it as we will, there is in every man that which is Divine; but usually this side of his nature is, as it were, turned away from view. Our personality has deeps which even our own consciousness has not plumbed, though at times it catches a glimpse of them. And we know that there are men whose consciousness is as much deeper than ours as ours is deeper than that of a babe. Whitman was one of these; and the fact that he was such a one must always render the writing of his biography a tentative task. It seems as though O'Connor, feeling this, had thrown his own attempt at portraiture into the form of a sort of parable. For his friends, while they saw possibilities in him which they also recognised in themselves, saw also others which bewildered them by their suggestions of the old hero-stories; and it cannot therefore be wondered, if sometimes they found in his life a similitude to that of the Nazarene.

The world is ever telling over the old legends, and wondering in spite of itself if, after all, they might be true. In our nobler moments we find ourselves rebelling

against the traditional limitations of our manhood; something within our own hearts assures us that humanity is destined to attain a nobler stature. Every new revelation of the possibilities of life, every new incarnation of humanity in some great soul, brings to our lips the name of Jesus. For in it the aspirations of the world's childhood have been made our own.

We can never believe that the story of the Christ closed with the earthly career of Jesus. We know that He will come again; that humanity will renew its promise; that the old stock will break once more into prophetic blossom. And waiting and watching, at the advent of every great one, our hearts cry out the ineffable name of our hope, at whose very hearing the soul of faith is refreshed. Every great soul assures us that the old, old stories are more than true; they are prophetic for our very selves; speaking to us of a Divine destiny and purpose to which we, too, may—nay, must—eventually arise. To Whitman's closest friends such was his gospel.

But it was not every one who could read him so significantly. Merely intellectual people, trying him by their own standards, often found him stupid. A young doctor, for instance, who had known him in New York, and was now a fellow-boarder with him upon M Street, records his own impression formed at this time, that Walt was physically lazy and intellectually hazy;[1] that his conversation was disappointingly enigmatic and obscure, and his words were misty, shadowy, elusive adumbrations. His vocabulary, says this gentleman, even when he was deeply affected by natural scenes, was almost grotesquely inadequate; they were "tip-top," he would declare; and you could only gather from his manner and the tone of his voice that he meant more than a shabby commonplace.

The doctor, who was doubtless an encyclopædia of accurate knowledge, found his companion sadly ignorant

[1] Potter, *op. cit.*

of the common names of the trees and birds they noticed on their rambles. A few years later, however, Whitman displayed so considerable a knowledge in these directions that one may at least suppose he profited considerably from his companion's information.[1] And even if he did not know their names, he came near to knowing their actual personality; which is probably more than even the worthy doctor attempted.

It is very certain that Whitman was no dreamer of vague dreams. His face at this time was equally expressive of alertness and of calm. His small eyes, grey-blue under their heavy-drooping passionate lids, were of an extraordinarily penetrating vision. They were the eyes of a spirit which looked out through them ceaselessly as from behind a shelter. Circled by a definite line, they had the perceptive draining quality of a child's when it is first awake to all the world's storehouse of strange things.[2] Never a merely passive onlooker, he was always a dynamic force, challenging and evoking the manhood of his friends.

This is notably the case in his relations with Peter Doyle, of whom I have already spoken as one of Walt's closest companions during the greater part of the Washington period. Doyle was a young Catholic, born in Ireland but raised in the Virginian Alexandria.[3] His father, a blacksmith and machinist, eventually went to work in a Richmond foundry; and when the war broke out, Pete, who was a mere lad, entered the Confederate army. Soon after, he was wounded and made a prisoner, and being carried to Washington, he obtained during his convalescence[4] the post of conductor on one of the tramcars running upon Pennsylvania Avenue. It was a course of some four miles, from Georgetown, by the White House and Treasury and near to Armory Square, up the hill by the Capitol and down again to near the Navy Yard on the Anacostia River. And in such

[1] See *infra*, 262. [2] O'Connor, qu. in Bucke, 62.
[3] Calamus, 21. [4] MSS. Wallace.

DOYLE AT TWENTY-TWO AND WHITMAN AT FIFTY

course he was bound sooner or later to make the acquaintance of Whitman.

Their meeting occurred one wild stormy night, perhaps in the winter of 1864-65,[1] when Pete was about eighteen. Walt had been out to see John Burroughs, and was returning wrapt around in his great blanket-rug, the only passenger in the car. Pete was cold and lonely: something about the big red-faced man within promised fellowship and warmth. So he entered the car and put his hand impulsively on Walt's knee. Walt was pleased; they seemed to understand one another at once; and instead of descending at his destination, the older man rode an extra four miles that night for friendship's sake.[2]

Pete was a fair well-built lad, with a warm Irish heart; and in Walt, who was old enough to have been his father, the fraternal and paternal qualities alike were

[1] Calamus, 23, gives 1866; but *Comp. Prose*, 70, throws date back: see also *supra*, 210.

[2] Although it has been previously quoted, the following passage from Mr. Burroughs' *Birds and Poets* gives so graphic a description of Whitman at this time, that I cannot forbear to quote it:—

"I give here a glimpse of him in Washington, on a Pennsylvania Avenue and Navy Yard horse-car, toward the close of the war, one summer day at sundown. The car is crowded and suffocatingly hot, with many passengers on the rear platform, and among them a bearded, florid-faced man, elderly but agile, resting against the dash, by the side of the young conductor, and evidently his intimate friend. The man wears a broad-brim white hat. Among the jam inside near the door, a young Englishwoman, of the working class, with two children, has had trouble all the way with the youngest, a strong, fat, fretful, bright babe of fourteen or fifteen months, who bids fair to worry the mother completely out, besides becoming a howling nuisance to everybody. As the car tugs around Capitol Hill, the young one is more demoniac than ever, and the flushed and perspiring mother is just ready to burst into tears with weariness and vexation. The car stops at the top of the hill to let off most of the rear platform passengers, and the white-hatted man reaches inside, and gently but firmly disengaging the babe from its stifling place in the mother's arms, takes it in his own, and out in the air. The astonished and excited child, partly in fear, partly in satisfaction at the change, stops its screaming, and as the man adjusts it more securely to his breast, plants its chubby hands against him, and pushing off as far as it can, gives a good look squarely in his face; then, as if satisfied, snuggles down with its head on his neck, and in less than a minute, is sound and peacefully asleep without another whimper, utterly fagged out."

very strong. Separated from his own children, and his own younger brothers whom he had dearly loved, his heart's tenderness expended itself upon other lads, and upon none more than upon Pete. There are few ties stronger than those which bind together the man or woman of middle life whose sympathies are still natural and warm, and the adolescent lad or maiden upon life's threshold.

Whitman did not appear merely as a good fellow to his young comrade: his affection ran too deep for that. This is well illustrated by an incident in their relationship.[1] In a passing fit of despondency Pete declared that life was no longer worth living, and that he had more than half a mind to end it. Walt answered him sharply; he was very angry and not a little shocked. This occurred upon the evening of his departure for Brooklyn for one of his visits home, and the two separated somewhat coldly.

Walt arrived really ill, suffering from a sort of partial and temporary paralysis, which seems to have attacked him at times during the latter part of his residence in Washington. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he wrote his friend a letter full of loving reproaches, of affectionate calls to duty, and promises of assistance. The unmanly folly of Pete's words had, he says, repelled him; but afterwards the sense of his indestructible love for the lad had returned again in fuller measure than ever, and he became certain that it was not the real Pete, "my darling boy, my young and loving brother," who had spoken those wicked words. He adjures him, by his love for his widowed mother and for Walt his comrade, to be a man.

Many of the letters to Pete, during the vacations in Brooklyn from 1868 to 1872, are marked by a sort of paternal anxiety for the young man's welfare. Pete was impulsive and emotional; he was not one to whom study or thrift was naturally easy. Walt aided him all he could in both directions. He was always encouraging

[1] Calamus, 53-55.

PETER G. DOYLE AT FIFTY-SEVEN

is "boys" to read good books, combining still, as in arlier years, the rôles of teacher and comrade; but he ever checked in any degree his friend's boyish, generous nd pleasure-loving nature. And his love was returned ith the whole-hearted loyal devotion of the true Celt.

This friendship with Doyle was only one among many,[1] nd the fact that Pete was a Catholic and had been a onfederate soldier, shows how far such relations trans-ended any mere similarity of opinion. Indeed, there is othing more notable in the circle of Whitman's friends han their extraordinary dissimilarity one from another.

Day after day, Pete would come to the Treasury uilding after his work was done, and wait sleepily here till Walt was free; when they would start off pon a stroll, which often extended itself for many iles into the country. Walt frequently had other ompanions upon these rambles. Sometimes it would e John Burroughs, and sometimes quite a party of nen, laughing, singing and talking gaily together as hey went.

Whitman was the heart of good-fellowship; he was he oldest of them in years, but in years only. One wonders sometimes whether he himself realised that all these men were so much his juniors. There was no omrade, either man or woman, who had grown up eside him, learning with him the lessons of life. His nother was the great link with his own boyhood, and he letters which he wrote to her from Washington[2] how how strong was his attachment to her, and how reat his capacity for home-love.

It is, then, not a little tragic that he had no home o call his own. In a sense he was a solitary man; in he midst of his all-embracing love and his self-revealing oems, Walt Whitman lived his life apart and kept many ecrets. In spirit he was as solitary as Thoreau, nay, ven more than he, for, though his fellowship was with he life Universal, his consciousness of it seemed unique.

[1] Calamus, 18. [2] Camden, viii., 169-243.

His self-reliant, masculine nature was attractive to women, with whom he had, as one of his friends phrased it, "a good way". With them and with children he was natural and happy.

Vague and anonymous figures of women move from time to time across his story. In 1863 it is with "a lady" that he first remarks the President's sadness.[1] In 1868 he has great talks and jolly times with the girls he meets on a trip in New England,[2] and he writes of his "particular women friends in New York". In 1869 he declares laughingly, he is quite a lady's man again as in the old days.[3]

Women trusted him instinctively, and he repayed their trust by a remarkable silence as to his relations with them. He understood the hearts of women, for there was in him much of the maternal. This quality often finds quaint expression in his letters to Pete, who is "dear baby"[4] sometimes, and who found more than one kiss sent him upon the paper.

As he became famous, Whitman had his queue of visitors. Now it is a spiritualistic woman, who breaks off her interview in order to converse with the spirit of Abraham Lincoln; and now a Mrs. McKnight,[5] who would paint his portrait. Later, when he fell ill, "Mary Cole" came and ministered to him.[6] Mrs. O'Connor, with Mrs. Burroughs and Mrs. Ashton, belonged to the circle of his friends. With women, as with men, he had his own frank way of expressing affection, and many a time he greeted them with a kiss, knowing it would not be misinterpreted.

From 1868 to 1870 he was engaged upon a brief political treatise, apparently suggested to him by Carlyle's vehement assault upon Democracy and all its ways, in *Shooting Niagara*.[7]

Life in Washington during and after the war had made the short-comings of Democracy very evident to

[1] *Wound-Dresser*, 90. [2] Calamus, 48. [3] *Ib.*, 62.
[4] Calamus. [5] Camden, viii., 235. [6] *In re*, 74.
[7] *Comp. Prose*, 208, 209 n.

hitman. The failure of President Johnson and his empted impeachment, had been followed by drastic asures for enforcing Republican ideas in the South all the abominable methods known to corruption d carpet-bag politicians. The year 1868 saw the ction of Grant to the Presidency, and under him rruption extended in every direction. Grant's real rk was finished at Appomattox,[1] and his eight years official life added nothing to his fame. But Whitman, aring the national regard for a simple-minded, down-ght soldier, heartily approved his nomination, and urged s brothers to support him.

For the carpet-bag reconstruction of the South he d, of course, no sympathy. He longed for a union hearts, and looked ardently forward to the day when e South, whom he loved so passionately, would realise ain her inalienable part in the Union. Without her merica was incomplete. And in the "magnet South"[2] as much that was personally dearest to Whitman's art.

The more extreme Abolitionist sentiment had com-ned with the exigency of party to create a position the Southern States which was intolerable to all ght feeling. The suffrage had been taken away from e rebellious whites and given instead to the negroes. was as though the management of the household ffairs should be entrusted to wholly irresponsible chil-ren. One need hardly add that it was not the negro ho ruled, but the political agent who bought his vote nd made a tool of him. Such a policy only exasperated e antagonism between North and South.

And Whitman, though he hated slavery, saw that he negro was not ready to exercise the full rights of itizenship. When the negro vote in the capital became ominant in political elections, and the black population araded the city in their thousands, armed and insolent, hey seemed to him "like so many wild brutes let loose".[3]

[1] Wister's *Grant*, 130. [2] *L. of G.*, 359.
[3] Camden, viii., 226 (May, 1868).

It was upon this question of negro-citizenship that he quarrelled with O'Connor. They had been arguing the subject, as O'Connor would insist on doing, and Walt, for the nonce, had the better of the bout. Thoughtlessly, and in the heat of the moment, he pressed his advantage too far; O'Connor lost his temper—perhaps Walt did the same—but when a moment later the older man returned to his usual good humour and held out his hand warmly to his friend, O'Connor's wrath was still hot; he was offended and refused the reconciliation. In spite of their friends the sad estrangement continued for years.

The political treatise appeared at last under the title of *Democratic Vistas*.[1] It is the outcome of Whitman's experiences and meditations upon the purpose of social and national life, especially during the last decade in Washington. In many respects it is an enlargement of portions of the first Preface.

In these fragmentary political memoranda Whitman is seen as the antagonist of what is often supposed to be the American character. The book is a scathing attack upon American complacency, which is even more detestable to Whitman than it was to Carlyle. He recognises the vulgarity and corruption that everywhere abound; the superficial smartness and alert commercial cunning which have taken the place of virtues in the current code of transatlantic morals. Flippant, infidel, unwholesome, mean-mannered; so he characterises New York, his beloved city. As fiercely as Carlyle he detests all the shams and hypocrises of democratic government, and he is as keen to discover the perils of universal suffrage.

But withal he holds fast to faith, and offers a constructive ideal. The jottings are threaded together by the reiterated declaration that national life will never become illustrious without a national literature. It is precisely here, says he, that America is fatally deficient.

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 197-251.

xcept upon the field of politics, what single thing of oral value has she originated? And what possible lue has all her material development unless it be companied by a corresponding development of soul?

There is something like an inconsistency of attitude this book; for here, on the one hand, we have Whitan assuming the rôle of the moralist, denouncing, enacing, upbraiding, and generally allowing himself employ the moralist's exaggerated, because partial, anner of speech. On the other hand, we find, interersed among these passages of condemnation, others hich assert his unwavering faith in the issue, his conant sense of the heroic character of the people.

Whitman never professed consistency, but his inconstency is generally explicable enough. In this case he of course denouncing the America of his day, only cause he is regarding her from the popular point of iew as something perfect and complete. He has faith America when he views her as a promise of what she all be; but even then only because he sees far into r essential character. The shallow, popular optimism , he knows, wholly false; for if America is to triumph, s he believes she will, it can only be by the profound ioral forces which are silently at work beneath the rivial shows of her prosperity.

The last enemy of the Republic was not slain when ie slave party of secession, with its feudal spirit, was vercome. The victory of the North has for the present cured American unity, and with it the broad types oth of Northern and of Southern character essential to ie creation of a generous and profound national spirit. But America has set forth upon the most tremendous ask ever conceived by man; a task indeed beyond the cope of any man's thought. Urged on by the inner estiny-forces of the race, she is attempting to realise ie race-ideal of a true democracy. To accomplish her rrand she must be nerved and vitalised by the highest nd deepest of ideals; for hers is a world-battle with ll the relentless foes of progress.

Whitman, seeing clearly the dark aspect of the future,

the wars and revolutions yet in store, and having counted the cost of them, though he had faith that America would eventually achieve her purpose, yet might well be foremost in scourging her light moods of optimism with bitter words. And though he had not despaired of America—and even if he had, would have been the last man to suggest despair to others—though, also, he knew and loved the real soul of the nation; he was not so blind to possibilities of disaster, possibilities which he had faced more than once in recent years, as to suppose that she was of necessity chosen to be the elder sister of the Republics of the coming centuries.[1]

On the contrary, while he had no doubt of the growth and progress of humanity, he knew that a branch of the race might wither away prematurely; and he saw in the current culture and social beliefs of the city populations a wholly false and mischievous conception of American destiny. If the people of America were to perceive nothing but a field for money-making wherever the Stars and Stripes might float, then their patriotism would be worthless, and the Republic must fall.

He loved America too passionately to be cynically indifferent as to her fate. In spite of unworthy qualities she yet might realise the world's hope. But seeking ardently for a way, there was only one that Whitman could see; it was the way of religion. The old priestcraft was effete, but religion had not died with it.[2] In a new fellowship of prophet-poets, who should awaken the Soul of the Nation in the hearts of their hearers, as did the prophet-poets of Israel, in these and in these alone he had assurance—for already he seemed to behold them afar off—assurance of the future of his land.[3]

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 246, 247. [2] *Ib.*, 200.

[3] In a most characteristic passage, which may be quoted as a specimen of the style of this book, he writes of "the need of powerful native philosophers and orators and bards . . . as rallying-points to come in times of danger. . . . For history is long, long, long. Shift and turn the combinations of the statement as we may, the problem of the future of America is in certain respects as dark as it is vast. Pride, competition, segregation, vicious wilfulness, and license beyond example, brood already upon us,

Whitman agreed with Carlyle as to the infinite value the race of great men. He continually asserts their cessity to Democracy; not, indeed, as masters and ptains so much as interpreters and as prophets. The ily great man includes more of the meaning of Democ-cy than the little man, and is therefore the better ted to explain the purpose of the whole. Moreover, cording to Whitman, it is for the creation of great rsonalities that Democracy exists; for he differs widely m the Platonic mysticism with its Ideal State as the l of personal achievement.

He includes in his philosophy of society what is best th in the individualistic and the socialistic theories. He s progress depending upon the interplay of two forces, ich he calls the two sexes of Democracy [1]—Solidarity d Personality. It is for great souls to declare in the

.. Flaunt it as we choose, athwart and over the roads of our progress, rn huge uncertainty, and dreadful, threatening gloom. It is useless teny it. Democracy grows rankly up the thickest, noxious, deadliest its and fruits of all—brings worse and worse invaders—needs newer, ger, stronger, keener compensations and compellers. Our lands em-cing so much (embracing indeed the whole, rejecting none), hold in ir breast that flame also [which is] capable of consuming themselves, suming us all. . . . We sail a dangerous sea of seething currents, ss and under-currents, vortices—all so dark, untried—and whither ll we turn? It seems as though the Almighty had spread before s nation charts of imperial destinies, dazzling as the sun, yet with ny a deep intestine difficulty and human aggregate of cankerous perfection—saying, lo! the roads, the only plans of development, g and varied with all terrible balks and ebullitions. . . . Behold the t, and already specimens of the cost. Thought you, greatness was to n for you like a pear? If you would have greatness, know that you st conquer it through ages, centuries—must pay for it with a pro-tionate price. Yet I have dreamed, merged in that hidden-tangled blem of our fate, whose long unravelling stretches mysteriously ough time . . . a little or a larger band—a band of brave and true, precedented yet—armed and equipped at every point—the members arated, it may be, by different dates and States . . . but always one, pact in soul, conscience-serving, God-inculcating, inspired achievers, only in literature the greatest art, but in all art—a new, undying er, dynasty, from age to age transmitted—a band, a class, at least as o cope with current years, our dangers, needs, as those who, for their es, so long, so well, in armour or in cowl, upheld and made illustrious t far back, feudal, priestly world."—*Comp. Prose*, 246-48; *cf.* also .

Comp. Prose, 221; 207 n.

name of Personality the fundamental truth of Demo
racy, that every man is destined to become a god. The
must realise for themselves, and assert for the worl
that a man well-born, well-bred and well-trained, ma
and must become a law unto himself.

According to Whitman, the one purpose of all gover
ment in a democracy is to encourage by all possibl
means the development of Soul-consciousness in eve
man and woman without any exception.[1] For, speak
ing generally, one may affirm that every fragment
humanity is ultimately capable of the heroism which
the force at humanity's heart; but each fragment ca
only realise its possibilities as a part of the whole, an
as sharing in the life of Solidarity.

To accomplish this destiny, and not for reasons
merit, Democracy encourages and requires of every or
a participation in the duties and privileges of citizenshi
And similarly, it requires that every one should be a
owner of property in order that each may have his ow
material cell in the body politic.[2]

All persons are not yet prepared for citizenship; b
such as are minors must be wisely and strenuous
prepared, for Democracy suffers until all become tru
citizens.

The idle and the very poor are always a menace
Democracy.[3]

Even a greater menace, if that be possible, is to
found in the low standard of womanhood which st
prevails in America. Woman, if only she would leav
her silliness and her millinery,[4] and enter the life
reality and enterprise, would, by the majesty of m
ternity, be more than the equal of man. I think
though approving of women's suffrage, he doubte
whether it could effect the change he desired to se

It cannot be doubted that, like Plato, he saw
the triviality of the women of the upper classes e
pecially, one of the gravest dangers which beset th
Republic. For the aim of Democracy is great fr

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 212. [2] *Ib.*, 215. [3] *Ib.*, 211. [4] *Ib.*, 206.

COL. WHITMAN'S CORNER HOUSE, No. 431, STEVENS STREET, CAMDEN, 1904

sonalities, and these can only be produced from a ble maternity. Unless motherhood and fatherhood all their aspects become a living science,[1] and the ctice of personal health is recognised as the finest of arts, any achievement of the purpose of Democracy ust be slow indeed.

Of other and very secondary kinds of culture, desir- e enough in their place, America, he continues, has lack. In some respects she is more European than rope. But to personality, and the moral force which personality, she is alarmingly indifferent. We have sed about the world, cries this stern speaker of truth his age and nation; we have gathered together its and its sciences, but we have not grown great in our n souls. Our mean manners result precisely from t.

Thus he returns to reiterate the cry that can always heard whenever we open any book of his, the cry of quintessential importance of religion in every field human life.[2] For religion is the life of the soul; that o say, it is the heart of life.

Whitman's religion, however, is not that which is ght by churches and churchmen. It is a religion ricated from the churches. In a notable passage[3] declares: "Bibles may convey, and priests expound, t it is exclusively for the noiseless operation of 's isolated self to enter the pure ether of veneration, ch the Divine levels, and commune with the un- erable". In short, religion is moral or spiritual ce: it is that which forms and maintains existence: thout it, the continued life of nation or individual inconceivable.

For a nation, too, has its soul-identity; and must come conscious of that if it is to live, much more if it to lead. The awakening of America to this conscious- ss of its spiritual purpose Whitman awaits, as the phets of Israel awaited the Messiah.[4] And we may l that with its realisation of nationhood, there comes

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 225. [2] *Ib.*, 226. [3] *Ib.*, 227. [4] *Ib.*, 240, 241.

to a people the sense of its membership in the solidarity of the race.

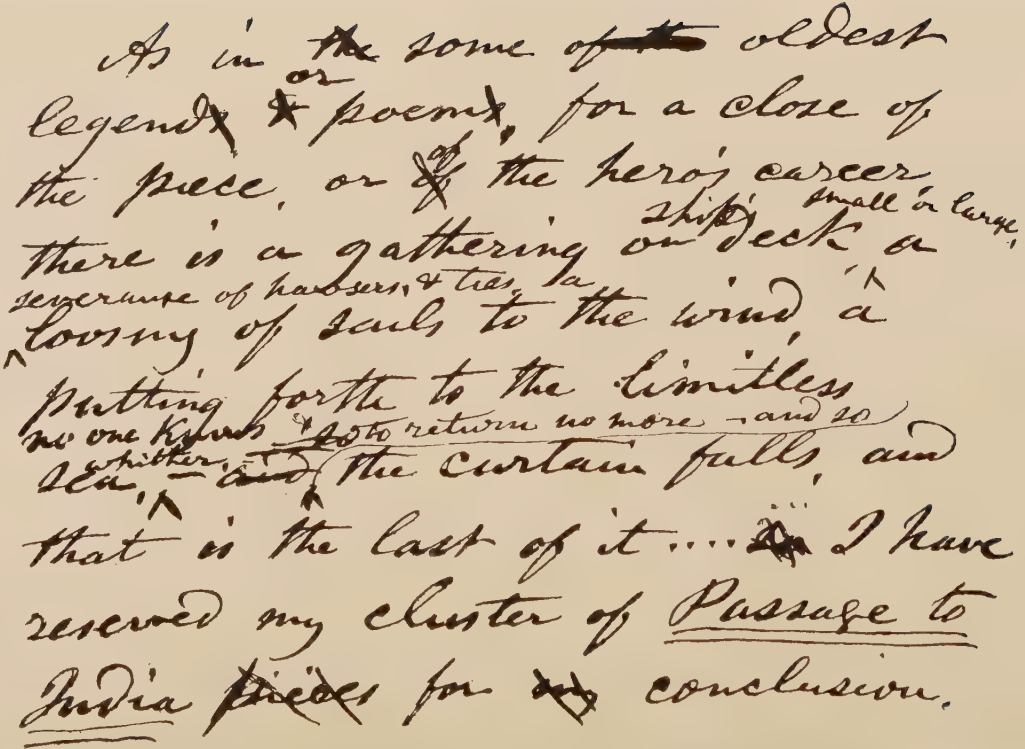
Now this soul-consciousness, he proceeds, comes to a nation through its literature. In its songs and in its great epics, a people tells and reads the secrets of its life; it sees there, as in a glass, the Divine purpose which tabernacles in its own heart.

A literature which can do this for America will not be made by merely correct and clever college men, or by fanciful adepts in the arts of verse. Those who make it must breathe the open air of Nature; they must, in the largest sense, be men of science. But in Whitman's language nature and science include more than the material and the seen. They are the world of reality and its knowledge; and the soul is the essence of reality: wherefore its experience is the sum of knowledge.

Thus made, literature will for the first time be worthy to quicken and immortalise the life of America.[1] It will feed the infant life of the real nation. Reading it Americans will become aware at last of their world-destiny; and they will face the whole of life and death with a new faith and joy. America will become not merely a new world, but the mother of new worlds:[2] and lowering as the skies must often be, and tragic though the day's end, she will behold the stars beyond.

Such, in crudest outline, is the gist of Whitman's tractate; which, with the fifth edition of the *Leaves*, appeared early in 1871. *Leaves of Grass* now included *Drum-taps;* but the poems of President Lincoln's death, with other matter suggested by the close of the war, were separately published in a little volume of 120 pages, which, while containing poems upon the lines suggested in *Democratic Vistas*, and reverting again to old themes, was more especially marked by those in which the idea of death as a voyage upon an unknown sea is dominant.

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 244. [2] *Ib.*, 250.



As in ~~the~~ some ~~of the~~ oldest legend~~s~~ ~~&~~ or poem~~s~~, for a close of the piece, or ~~of~~ of the hero's career there is a gathering on ship's deck, small or large, a severance of hawsers, & ties, a loosing of sails to the wind, a putting forth to the limitless sea, no one knows whither, ~~and~~ & so to return no more — and so the curtain falls, and that is the last of it .... ~~In~~ I have reserved my cluster of Passage to India ~~pieces~~ for ~~my~~ conclusion.

FAC-SIMILE OF MS. BY WHITMAN, BELONGING PROBABLY TO 1875

The little book was called *Passage to India*, after the ning poem; and it has a completeness of its own, sing with a "Now Finalé to the Shore". In its pre- e, he alludes to a plan which he had entertained—his ive imagination entertained so many plans which he ver realised![1]—the scheme of a new volume to com- nion and complement the *Leaves*, suggestive of death d the disembodied soul, as the *Leaves* were of the life the body. He found, however, that the body was t so soon to be put aside; to the end, its hold upon n was extraordinarily tenacious. Doubting his ability the task, he became content to offer a fragment and nt of what he had intended.

Passage to India is among his finest efforts.[2] Some its single lines ring like clear bells, while the move- nt of the whole is varied, solemn and majestic. e shows his reader how the enterprise and invention the world is binding all lands together to complete e "rondure" of the earth. The opening of the Suez nal and of the Pacific Railroad are fulfilling the eam of the Genoese, who sought a passage to India in e circumnavigation of the world.

But, says Whitman, with that characteristic mystical uch which is never absent in his poems, it is only the et who conceives of the world as really one and und. For none but he understands that the universe essentially one, Soul and Matter, Nature and Man. the mystic sense, India becomes symbolic of all the st elemental intuitions of the human race. Thither w again the poet leads his nation, back to its first sions and back to God.

Returning almost to the phrases of his first great em,[3] Whitman declares his sureness of God, and his solve not to dally with the Divine mystery. For him, d is the heart of all life, but especially the heart of life that is true, good and loving: He is the reservoir the spiritual, and He is the soul's perfect and im- ortal comrade. Thus Whitman's idea of God em-

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 273 n. [2] *L. of G.*, 315. [3] *Ib* 321, 76.

braces the "personal" element, so-called, which has been predicated by Christian experience and dogma.

When the soul has accomplished its "Passage to India"—has realised the unity of all[1]—then, says he, it will melt into the arms of its Elder Brother, the Divine Love. He does not mean that it will lose its slowly gained consciousness of selfhood; but that, to employ a formula of the Christian faith, it will enter the Godhead as a distinct Person. For the Godhead of Whitman's theology is the ultimate unity of ultimate personalities—Many-in-one, the God of Love, the Heart of Communion or Fellowship.

It is with a splendid cry of adventurous delight and heroic ardour that Whitman sets out upon his perilous voyage, seeking the meaning of everything and of the whole, all hazards and dangers before him, upon all the seas of the Unknown: but not foolhardily—"Are they not all the seas of God?"

In passing, we may note that in these Washington poems the feeling for formal perfection is often clearly manifested. Many of the shorter lyrics repeat the opening line at their close. And careful reading, or better, recitation, will show that some at least of the longer poems are constructed with a broad, architectonic plan.

It is indeed a great mistake to suppose that Whitman was careless of form. Paradoxical though it sound, it was nothing but his overwhelming sense of the necessity for a living incarnation of his motive-emotions which led him to abandon the accepted media of written expression. He probably laboured as closely, deliberately and long upon his loose-rhythmed verses as a more precious stylist upon his. Whether successful or no, he was most conscientious and self-exacting in his obedience to the creative impulse, and in his selection of such cadences and words as seemed to his ear the best to render its precise import.

[1] *L. of G.*, 322.

Probably the quiet life at Washington, and the intercourse there with studious and thoughtful men and women, helped his artistic sense. With a few exceptions, however, the Washington poems are somewhat less inevitable and procreative in their quality than those of an earlier period. They are not less interesting, but they are less elemental.

"The older he gets," wrote a correspondent of the *New York Evening Mail*, "the more cheerful and gay-hearted he grows."[1] Though he was now beginning to wear glasses, his jolly voice as he sang blithely over his bath, and his thrush-like whistle,[2] his hearty appetite and love of exercise, bore witness to vigour and good spirits.

The circle of his friends grew daily wider, and a measure of international fame began to come to him. Both in Germany and in France his book was being read, criticised and admired.[3] Rossetti's selections had given him an English public, which was eager now for new editions of his complete poems; he had cordial letters from Tennyson and Addington Symonds; Swinburne addressed him in one of his "Songs before Sunrise," and there were many others.[4]

From time to time he would receive an invitation from some academic or other body to recite a poem at a public function. Thus, in the autumn of 1871, he gave his "Song of the Exposition" at the opening of the annual exhibition of the American Institute;[5] it is a half-humorous poem, which follows some of the political themes suggested in *Democratic Vistas*. Again, at midsummer, 1872, he recited "As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free"[6] on the invitation of the United Literary Societies of Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire; making at this time a further tour as far as Lake Champlain, to visit his sister Hannah, who was married unhappily and far from all her people.[7]

[1] Bucke, 44. [2] Burroughs, 126. [3] Bucke, 202, 203, 207-9.
[4] *In re*, 72. [5] *L. of G.*, 157; *cf.* "Two Rivulets," Song of Expos.
[6] *L. of G.*, 346. [7] Calamus, 98.

Later the same autumn, old Mrs. Whitman left Brooklyn to live with her son, the colonel, in Camden a quiet unattractive artisan suburb of Philadelphia The old lady, now nearly eighty, partially crippled by rheumatism, and a widow for some eighteen years, did not long survive this transplanting. But sorrows came thick upon the Whitmans at this time. And first of all, it was Walt himself who broke down and was house-tied.

CHAPTER XV

ILLNESS

AT the opening of 1873 Whitman had been just ten years in Washington, and was in the fifty-fourth of his age. Recent letters to his friends had told of more frequent spells of partially disabling sickness and lassitude.[1] On the evening of Thursday, January 23rd, he sat late over the fire in the Library of the Treasury Building, reading Lord Lytton's *What will he do with it?*[2] As he left, the guard at the door remarked him looking ill.

His room was close by, just across the street; and he went to bed as usual. Between three and four in the morning, he awoke to find that he could move neither arm nor leg on the left side. Presently he fell asleep again; and later, as he could not rise, lay on quietly, till some friends coming in raised the alarm and fetched a doctor. After some six or seven years of preliminary symptoms,[3] Walt had now had a slight stroke of paralysis.

His first thought was of his mother, to whom he wrote as soon as he was able, reassuring her; for the newspapers had exaggerated his condition. Once before, he reminds her with grim humour, they had killed him off; but he is on the road to recovery; in a few days he will be back at his desk on the other side of the street.

Pete Doyle, Charles Eldridge and John Burroughs

[1] Camden, viii., 238-40; Calamus, 86.
[2] Bucke, 46; *In re*, 73. [3] Camden, ix., 200.

came in to nurse and companion him: Mrs. Ashton would have carried him to her house; Mrs. O'Connor, who did not share in the estrangement of her husband, was often at his bedside. And at the bed-foot, his mother's picture was always before him.

He had scarcely begun to move about a little in his room before a letter from St. Louis told of the death of Martha, Jefferson Whitman's wife, to whom the whole family was much attached, and Walt especially. The blow fell heavily on him.

On the last day of March,[1] he crossed the street again to his work; and by the end of April he was having regular electrical treatment, and working for a couple of hours daily, with an occasional lapse. His leg was very clumsy, and he complained of frequent sensations of distress and weakness in his head, but he seemed to be progressing as well as was possible.

Early in May, however, the old mother in Camden fell ill. Walt was very anxious about her;[2] at her age she could hardly recover from a serious illness, and his letters to her are pathetically full of loving solicitude. She grew rapidly worse, and although he was still but feeble, he could not remain away from her. On the 20th he hurried home, and on the 23rd, while he was with her, she died.[3]

The shock to Walt was terrible; and when, dreading the heat, he attempted to reach the coast, he had a serious relapse at the outset, and was brought back to Colonel Whitman's, to the melancholy little house. And here he too, so it would seem, was to end his life.

Only a year before, in the preface to the reprint of his Dartmouth College poem,[4] he had declared that now—the Four Years' War being over, and he himself having rounded out the poem of the "Democratic Man or Woman"—he was prepared for a new enterprise. He would now set to work upon fulfilling the pro-

[1] *In re*, 79. [2] *In re*, 89. [3] Calamus, 99; Bucke, 46.
[4] *Comp. Prose*, 272.

amme of his *Democratic Vistas;* and put the States America hand-in-hand "in one unbroken circle a chant". He would sing the song for which nerica waited, the song of the Republic that is yet be.

Again, a year earlier, he had told in his *Passage to lia* how he was ready to set forth upon the Unknown a.

And now, with his labours unaccomplished, his heart icken and heavy with bereavement, joylessly he emed to hear the weighing of the anchor and to feel s ship already setting forth. Where now was the l exaltation of spirit; where the eager longing for vine adventure with which hitherto he had always ntemplated death?

Now sorrow claimed him, and for a season he lost ld of joy and faith. He was as one abandoned the Giver of Life, and isolated from Love. Thus serted, he became utterly exhausted of vitality. It is though for a time his soul had parted from his bodily e, and yet the life in the body must go on. If death d come now he would not have refused it; but his ur was not yet. Neither living nor dying, through ne sad, dark days of long protracted illness and solitude, physical debility and mental bewilderment—as it were, rough year-long dream-gropings—he waited.

The light of his life seemed suddenly to have gone t.[1] Near as he had dwelt to death, in the tragedy of e war-hospitals and in the habit of his thought, he as wholly unprepared for the death of his mother.

He was a man upon whose large harmonious and re-onant nature every tragic experience struck out its illest note. Philosophy and religion were his, if they ere any man's; but he was not one of those who scape experience in the byways of abstraction. He ok each blow full in his breast.

His mother was dead; that was the physical wrench which crippled him body and soul. He could not

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 274 n.

accustom himself to her death and departure.[1] He could not understand it, nor why he was so stricken by it. It seemed as though in her life his mother had given to her son something that was essential to that soul-consciousness in which he had lived, and that her death had broken his own life asunder, so that it was no longer harmonious and triumphant.

His mother was dead, and he was alone in Camden. Not perhaps actually alone, for his new sister, George's wife, was always kindly; and so, indeed, was George himself. But spiritually he was alone. He had lost something, it seems, of the spiritual companionship which had made the world a home to him wherever he went. And now the human comrades who had come so close were far away. Washington and New York were equally out of reach; and he had lost O'Connor. Letters, indeed, he had; but they did not make up to him for the daily magnetic contact with the men and women whom he loved. Touch and presence meant more to him than to others, and these he had lost.

He was, then, very much alone; bereft at once, so it would seem, of the material and the spiritual consciousness of fellowship; standing wholly by himself, in the attitude of that live-oak he had once wondered at in Louisiana, because it uttered joyous leaves of dark green though it stood solitary.[2] He was like a tree blasted by lightning; yet he too continued to put forth his leaves one and one, letters of cheery brief words to his old comrades, and especially to Pete.[3] He was an old campaigner worsted at last, standing silently at bay; only determined, come what might, that he would not grumble or complain.

His circumstances were not all gloomy. Through the summer of 1873, Whitman remained with his brother at number 322, Stevens Street, in the pleasant room his mother had occupied upon the first floor. Around him were the old familiar objects dear to him from childhood.

[1] Calamus, 104, 109. [2] *L. of G.*, 105. [3] See Calamus.

He was not wholly house-tied: two lines of street-cars ran near by,[1] and by means of one or other he contrived to reach the ferry, which he loved to cross and cross again, revelling in the swing of the tawny Delaware, and all the comings and goings of the river and ocean craft. Hale old captains still remember him well as he was in those days. Sometimes also he would extend his jaunt, taking the Market Street cars on the Philadelphia side of the river, and going as far as the reading-room of the Mercantile Library upon Tenth Street.[2]

But often he was too weak to go abroad for days together. His brain refused to undertake the task of leadership or co-ordination, and there was no friend to assist him. With his lame leg and his giddiness, he had at the best of times hard work to move about; but as he wrote to Pete, "I put a bold face on, and *my best foot foremost*".[3]

During bad days he sat solitary at home, trying to maintain a good heart, his whole vitality too depressed to do more. "If I only felt just a little better," he would say, "I should get acquainted with many of the [railroad] men," [4] a class who affected this particular locality. But feeble as he was, it was long before he made any friends to replace the lost circle at Washington. Now and again some kindly soul, hearing that he was ill, would call upon him: [5] or Jeff would look in on his way to New York, or Eldridge or Burroughs, coming and going between Washington and New England.

Walt could not readily adjust himself to his new circumstances. His was not an elastic, pliable temper; but on the contrary, very stubborn, and apt to become set in ways; the qualities of adhesion and inertia increasing in prominence as his strong will and initiative ebbed. He kept telling himself between the blurs that disabled his brain, that he might be in a much more deplorable fix; that his folks were good to him; that his post was

[1] See Calamus, 106. [2] *Ib.*, 111. [3] *Ib.*, 106. [4] *Ib.*
[5] *E.g.*, the late Mr. Wm. Ingram.

kept open for his return, and that his friends were only waiting to welcome him back to Washington.

But he could not pass by or elude the ever-present consciousness and problem of his mother's death. At the end of August he wrote to Pete : " I have the feeling of getting more strength and easier in the head—something like what I was before mother's death. (I cannot be reconciled to that yet : it is the great cloud of my life—nothing that ever happened before has had such an effect on me.) "[1] When we remember his separation from the woman and the children of his love, and all the experiences of the war, we may a little understand the meaning of these soberly written words, and the strength of the tie which bound together mother and son. Who knows or can estimate the full meaning of that relationship which begins before birth, and which all the changes and separations of life and death only deepen ?

It is difficult to look calmly at this period of Whitman's life. One resents, perhaps childishly, the fate which overtook this sane and noble soul. Surely he, of all men, had been faithful to the inner vision, and generous to all. He had fulfilled the Divine precept ; he had loved the Lord his God with all the might of soul and body, and his neighbour as himself. From childhood up he had been clean and affectionate, independent and loyal, whole-heartedly obedient to the law as it was written in his heart, undaunted by any fear or convention.

He had prized health, and held it sacred, as the essential basis of freedom and sanity of spirit. And he had hazarded it without reserve and without fear, in the infectious and malarial wards of the hospitals.

He had opened his heart to learn the full chords and meanings of all the emotions that came to him ; and when he had become a scholar in these, he became an interpreter of the soul unto itself, both in the printed page and in the relations of his life. In *Leaves of Grass*

[1] Calamus, 109.

e gave, to whosoever would accept the gift, his own titude towards life, and the results of his study of ving. In the wards he gave himself in whatever ways e could contrive to the needy.

And he gave all. Twenty years at least of his own ealth he sacrificed, and gave freely, out of the overflow his love, to the wounded in their cots. As I have efore suggested,[1] he gave more than, physically speak- g, he could afford. But he gave with joy, knowing at he was born to give, and that in giving himself retrievably, he was fulfilling the highest law of his eing, and fully and finally realising himself. It was ne crowning proof not only of "Calamus," but of his ospel of self-realisation.

Deliberate though his service was, not even Whitman imself could fully estimate the cost of his charity. But he accepted the consequences of all his acts as roper and due, being, indeed, implicit in the acts them- elves. And now, when his very joy in life was called in o meet the mortgage he had given; when he was, as it were, stripped naked and left in the dark; he accepted his condition without declaiming against the Divine ustice, or calling insanely upon God.

Year after year, he was patient, expecting the light to break again, the daylight beyond death. He had never professed to understand the ways of God, but he had always trusted Him. And when faith itself seemed for awhile to forsake him, his blind soul did but sit silently awaiting its return.

It was out of such a mood, lighted at times by moments of vision, that during 1874 and 1875 he wrote some of the noblest of his verses, notably the "Prayer of Columbus," the "Song of the Universal," and the "Song of the Redwood Tree".

There are those who have suggested that Whitman's illness was brought on by a life of dissipation; one supposes that such persons find in these poems the

[1] See *supra*, 204.

death-bed repentance of a maudlin old *roué*. But to the unprejudiced reader such a view must appear worse than absurd. Whitman never claimed to have lived a blameless life, but he did claim to have lived a sane and loving one; the evidence of all his writings, and of these poems especially, supports that claim.

Simple and direct, the "Prayer of Columbus" breathes the religious spirit in which it was conceived. Lonely, poor and paralysed, battered and old, upon the margin of the great ocean of Death, he pours out his heart and tells the secret of his life; for, as Whitman himself confessed, it is he who speaks under a thin historical disguise.[1]

I am too full of woe!
Haply I may not live another day;
I cannot rest, O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,
Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with Thee,
Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,
My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration merely;
Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,
Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary meditations,
Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to come to Thee,
Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and strictly kept them,
Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in Thee. . . .

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,
My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thoughts of Thee,
Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee;
Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results to Thee.

O I am sure they really came from Thee,
The urge, the ardour, the unconquerable will,
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,
These sped me on. . . .

What the end and result of all, he cannot tell—that is God's business; but he has felt the promise of freedom, religious joy and peace. The way itself has always been plain to him, lit by an ineffable, steady illumination, "lighting the very light". And now, lost in the un-

[1] Calamus, 145; *L. of G.*, 323.

own seas, he will again set forth, relinquishing the
m of choice; and though the vessel break asunder
ll his mind itself should fail, yet will his soul cling
t to the one sure thing; for though the waves of the
known buffet his soul, "Thee, Thee, at least I know".

In the "Song of the Universal"—apparently delivered
proxy at the Commencement Exercises of Tuft's
llege, Massachusetts, midsummer, 1874[1]—Whitman
terates his conviction that the Divine is at the heart
all and every life. The soul will at last emerge from
l and disease to justify its own history, to bring health
t of disease, and joy out of sorrow and sin. Blessed
they who perceive and pursue this truth! It is to
ward this wondrous discovery of the soul that America
s, in the ripeness of time, arrived.

measured faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of the past,
not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,
fic faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending all,
eligible to all.

, all for immortality,
ve like the light silently wrapping all,
ture's amelioration blessing all,
e blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,
rms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images ripening.

ve me, O God, to sing that thought,
ve me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,
Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from us,
lief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,
alth, peace, salvation universal.

Without this faith the world and life are but a dream.

The "Song of the Californian Redwood"[2] still harps
on American destiny and upon the mystery of death.
ne giant of the dense forest, falling before the axes of
e pioneers, declares the conscious soul that lives in all
tural things. He complains not at death, but rejoices
at his huge, calm joy will hereafter be incarnate in
ore kingly beings—the men that are yet to dwell in

[1] *L. of G.*, 181. [2] *Ib.*, 165.

this new land of the West—and, above all, in the God like genius of America. The "Song of the Redwood Tree" is the voice of a great past, prophetic of a greater, all-continuing, all-embracing future, and, therefore, undismayed at its own passing.

Such were the weapons with which Whitman fought against despair; such the heroic heart which, amid confusion, restlessness and perplexity, still held its own.

At the end of September, 1873, the Whitmans had moved into a fine new brick house[1] which George, who was now a prosperous inspector of pipes, had built upon a corner lot on Stevens Street. It faced south and west, and Walt chose a sunny room on the second floor, as we should say, or, according to the American and more accurate enumeration, on the third. Here he remained for ten years.

The house still stands, well-built and comfortable; and though the neighbourhood is shabby and the district does not improve with time, the trees that stand before it give it a pleasant air upon a summer's day. Walt was to have had a commodious room upon the floor below, specially designed for his comfort and convenience, but he preferred the other as sunnier and more quiet.

The family now consisted of three only, for Edward, the imbecile brother, was boarding somewhere near by in the country. Jeff was in St. Louis, the two sisters were married, Andrew had died. About Jesse we have no information; he may still have been living in Long Island or New York.

More than once Whitman wrote very seriously to Pete, gently preparing him for the worst;[2] but though confinement, loneliness and debility of brain and body made the days and nights dreary, there continued to be gleams of comfort. John Burroughs had begun to build his delightful home upon the Hudson, and called at Camden on his way north, after winding up his affairs in the capital. Among occasional callers was

[1] Number 431; Calamus, 118. [2] Calamus, 119, etc.

: W. J. Linton, who afterwards drew the portrait for
Centennial edition of the *Leaves*. And Walt made the
uaintance of a jovial Colonel Johnston, at whose house
would often drink a cup of tea on Sunday afternoons.[1]
Then, too, the young men at the ferry, and the drivers
ll conductors on the cars, came to know and like him,
ping him as he hobbled to and fro.[2] He was often
reshed by the sunsets on the river, and by the winter
ssings through the floating ice;[3] while the sound and
t of the railroad cars crossing West Street, less than
uarter of a mile away, reminded him constantly of
e Doyle, now a baggage-master on the "Baltimore
l Potomac".

He had a companion, too, in his little dog,[4] which came
went with him, and all these pleasant, homely little
tters go to make his letters as cheerful as may be.
nly he could be in his own quarters, and among his
nds, he would be comparatively happy. It is the
ne-feeling and affection that he craves all the time;
n a wood-fire would help towards that, but alas,
ther George has installed an improved heater!

About midsummer, 1874, a new Solicitor-General
harged Whitman from his post at Washington.[5]
herto Walt had employed a substitute to carry on his
rk. But he had now been ill some eighteen months,
l the prospect of his return was becoming so remote
t he could not feel he had been treated unjustly.

From this time forward his financial position became
carious. The amount of his savings grew less and
, and his earnings were not large. Besides be-
ning to edit his hospital memoranda for publication,
wrote for the papers and magazines whenever his
d allowed him to do so; and in England, as well as
home, there was still some demand for his book.
t even the scanty sales-money did not always reach
, being retained by more than one agent who re-
ded the author's life as practically at an end.[6]

[1] Calamus, 126, 127. [2] *Ib.*, 133. [3] *Ib.*, 143. [4] *Ib.*, 137.
[5] *Ib.*, 155. [6] Bucke, 46.

CHAPTER XVI

CONVALESCENCE

ALL through 1875 the weakness continued; but
November he was well enough to pay a visit
Washington, accompanied by John Burroughs; and, t
public re-burial of Poe taking place about that time
Baltimore, Doyle appears to have convoyed him thithe
There, sitting silently on the platform at the publ
function, he seems once again to have been cordial
greeted by Emerson, but O'Connor, who was al
present, made no sign.[2]

It was not till the following summer that Whitma
old spirits began to return. Since his mother died
had passed three years in the valley of the shadow, a
he was still lonely, sick and poor when his Engli
friends came to his rescue.

He and his writings had been pulverised between t
heavy millstones of Mr. Peter Bayne's adjectives
the *Contemporary Review* for the month of Decemb
In England, as well as in America, he had litera
enemies in high places. But on the 13th of Mar
the *Daily News*[3] published a long and characteristica
fervid letter, full of generous feeling, from Mr. Robe
Buchanan, who dilated upon the old poet's isolatio
neglect and poverty. It aroused wide comment, a
some indignation on both sides of the Atlantic, amo
Whitman's friends as well as among his enemies.

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 150.
[2] The incidents may not all belong to this visit.
[3] Bucke, 213.

TIMBER CREEK: THE POOL, 1904

That he was never deserted by his faithful American
nds a series of articles upon his condition, published
the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican*, bears witness.[1]
t Buchanan's letter evoked new and widespread
mpathy, which was the means of saving Whitman
m his melancholy plight. A fortnight later the
enæum printed his short sonnet-like poem, "The
n-o'-War Bird".

In the meantime, Mr. Rossetti, always faithful to his
nd, had learned of his condition, and had written
ing how best his English admirers might offer him
istance. Walt wrote in reply, stating that his
ings were exhausted, that he had been cheated by
New York agents, and that in consequence he
s now, for the new Centennial edition, which had
t appeared, his own sole publisher.[2] If any of his
glish friends desired to help him, they could best
so by the purchase of the book. He wrote with
ctionate gratitude, and quiet dignity. He was poor,
he was not in want.

There came, through Mr. Rossetti, an immediate,
nerous and most cordial response, and in the list of
glish and Irish subscribers appear many illustrious
nes. The invalid revived; "both the cash and the
otional cheer," he wrote at a later time, "were deep
dicine".[3] He could now afford to overlook the bitter
l contemptuous attacks which were being made upon
n by an old acquaintance in the editorials of the *New*
k Tribune.[4] And, which was at least equally impor-
t, he could contrive to take a country holiday.

About the end of April, or early in May, he drove out
ough the gently undulating dairy lands and the fields
young corn to the New Jersey hamlet of Whitehorse,
ne ten miles down the turnpike which leads to
antic City and Cape May.[5] A little beyond the

[1] *W. W. Autobiographia*, 205 n.
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 311, 312; Donaldson, 29-31.
[3] *Comp. Prose*, 519.
[4] Bucke, 215, 216, etc. [5] *Cf. Comp. Prose*, 75.

village, and close to the Reading Railroad, there sti
stands an old farmhouse, then tenanted by Mr. Georg
Stafford, and to-day the centre of a group of pleasar
villas known as Laurel Springs.

It was here that Whitman lodged, establishin
cordial relations with the whole Stafford family, rel
tions which added greatly to the happiness of h
remaining years. He became especially attached
Mrs. Stafford, who intuitively read his moods,[1] and
her son Harry.

A short stroll down the green lane, which is no
being rapidly civilised out of that delightful categor
brings one to a wide woody hollow, where amid t
trees a long creek or stream winds down to a large mi
pool with boats and lily leaves floating upon it. Sa
for the boats and the people from the villas, the pla
has been but little changed by the quarter of a centu
which has elapsed since Whitman first visited it.[2] T
walnut and the oak under which he used to sit amo
the meadow-grass are older trees, of course, and t
former is now circled with a wooden seat; but the ke
and crickets, the shady nooks by the pool, the jew
weed and the great-winged tawny butterflies are the
as of old. And with them much of the old, sweet, co
municative quiet.

At the creek-head, among the willows, is a swam
tangle of mint and calamus, reeds and cresses, wh
boneset and orange fragile jewel-weed, and above, fr
its mouth in the steep bank, gushes the "crystal sprin
whose soft, clinking murmur soothed the old man ma
a summer's day.

Here, early and late, he would sit or saunter throu
the glinting glimmering lights, and here Mother-Natu
took him, an orphan, to her breast. The baby and b
hood days in the lanes and fields at West Hills, a
among the woods and orchards came back to him a
blessed him with significant memories. To outwa

[1] MSS. Wallace. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 75.

TIMBER CREEK—"CRYSTAL SPRING" AND THE OLD MARSH.

eming an old man, and near sixty as years go, in art he was still and always a child. And for the last ree years a broken-hearted, motherless child. He had n starving to death for lack of the daily ministry of ove.

At Timber Creek, by the pool and in the lanes, the ich of that all-embracing Love which pervades the iverse was upon him. Without any effort on his part caressing air and sunshine re-established the ancient ationship of love, in which of old he had been united Nature. He would sit silent for hours, wrapt in a t of trance, realising the mystery of the Whole, ough which, as through a body, the currents of life w and pulse. Woe to any one, however dear, who ke suddenly in upon his solitude![1]

His heart went out to the tall poplars and the upright lars with their tasselled fruit, and he felt virtue flow m them to him in return. He believed the old dryad ries, and became himself truly nympholeptic, and are of presences in the woods. In August, 1877, he ites: "I have been almost two years, off and on, thout drugs and medicines, and daily in the open air. st summer I found a particularly secluded little dell one side by my creek, originally a large dug-out rl-pit, now abandoned, filled with bushes, trees, grass, group of willows, a straggling bank and a spring of icious water running right through the middle of it, th two or three little cascades. Here I retreated ry hot day, and follow it up this summer. Here I alise the meaning of that old fellow who said he was dom less alone than when alone. Never before did I ne so close to Nature, never before did she come so se to me. By old habit I pencilled down from time time almost automatically, moods, sights, hours, tints d outlines on the spot."[2]

Unlike the ordinary naturalist he regarded the birds d trees, the dragon-flies and grey squirrels, the oak- es and the breeze that sang among their leaves, as

[1] MSS. Wallace. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 96-98.

spirits; strange, but kindred with his own, members together with his of a transcendental life; and he communed with them. Something, he felt sure, they interchanged; something passed between them.

Their mystical fellowship had its ritual, as have all religions. The place was sacred, and he did off, not only his shoes, but all his raiment, giving back himself to naked Mother-Nature, naked as he was born of her. In the solitude, among the bare-limbed gracious trees and the clear-flowing water, he enjoyed many a sun-bath, and on hot summer days, in his bird-haunted nook, many a bathing in the spring; many a wrestle, too, with strong young hickory sapling or beech bough, conscious, as they wrestled together, of new life flowing into his veins.[1]

Whatever ignorance of names his Washington acquaintance may have discovered,[2] his diary at this time is full of nature-lore. It enumerates some forty kinds of birds, and he was evidently familiar with nearly as many sorts of trees and shrubs; while differentiating accurately enough between the sundry trilling insects, locusts, grasshoppers, crickets and katydids which populate the district, vibrant by day and night. Doubtless he had learnt much from the companionship of John Burroughs, but he was himself an accurate observer.

The story of his visits to Timber Creek and its vicinity from 1876 to 1882 is told in *Specimen Days*, with much else beside—a book to carry with one on any holiday or to make a holiday in the midst of city work. It is, for the rest, an admirable illustration of the saying of the philosopher-emperor, that virtue is a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature.[3]

Three years of gradual convalescence were divided not only between the Stafford's farm and the house of Stevens Street, but also with the homes of other friends whose love now began to enrich his life.[4] Of three of the most notable among his new comrades we must speak

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 91, 92, 98. [2] *Ib.*, 84, 94, 116; *cf. supra*, 230.
[3] *Ib.*, 193. [4] MSS. Diary; Calamus, 170.

passing. In the autumn of 1876 Anne Gilchrist took house in Philadelphia, while in the following summer . Bucke and Mr. Edward Carpenter came to Camden pilgrimage.

Whitman often said in his later years that his best ends had been women, and that of his women friends rs. Gilchrist was the nearest. She was an Essex girl good family, nine years younger than Whitman.[1] At hool she had loved Emerson, Rousseau, Comte and skin, and a little later she added to them the writings Carlyle, Guyot and Herbert Spencer. Music and ience, with the philosophical suggestions which spring m the discoveries of science, were her chief interests. At twenty-three she married Alexander Gilchrist, an t-critic and interpreter. It was a wholly happy mar- ge; Anne became the mother of four children, and, side being deeply interested in her husband's work, ntrived to contribute scientific articles to the maga- nes.

While compiling his well-known *Life of Blake*, Mr. ilchrist fell a victim to scarlet fever. His widow, with r four young children and the uncompleted book, re- oved to a cottage in the country, and there, with the couragement and help of the Rossetti brothers, she nished her husband's task. Her life was now, as she id, "up hill all the way," but the book helped her. nd her close study of Blake, added to her scientific terests and her love of music, formed the finest ssible introduction to her subsequent reading of Whitman.

Her task was concluded in 1863; it had tided her ver the first two years of her bereavement; but her tters of sympathy to Dante Rossetti, heart-broken at he loss of his young wife, discover her gnawing sorrow et undulled by time. Like Whitman, she had the capa- ity for great suffering. And like Whitman, too, she as helped in her sorrow by the companionship of Nature. And, again, she was a good comrade.

[1] *Anne Gilchrist*, by H. H. G.

Unlike her grandmother, who was one of Romney's beauties, Anne Gilchrist was not a handsome woman; but her personality was both vivid and profound, and increasingly attractive as the years passed. She was so serious and eager in temperament that, even in London, she lived in comparative retirement.

The letters which she exchanged with the Rossettis during a long period are evidence both of her common-sense and her capacity for passionate sympathy. They are often as frank as they are noble; revealing a nature too profound to be continually considerate of criticism. This gives to some of her utterances a half naïve and wholly charming quality, which cannot have been absent from her personality, and must have endeared her to the comrades whom she honoured with her confidence.

This high seriousness of hers made her the readier to appreciate a poet who, almost alone among Americans, has bared his man's heart to his readers, careless of the cheap ridicule of those smart-witted cynics whom modern education and modern morality have multiplied till they are almost as numerous as the sands of the sea. She was a little more than forty when she first read *Leaves of Grass* and wrote those letters to W. M. Rossetti in which she attested her appreciation of their purpose and power.[1]

It was no light thing for a woman to publish such a declaration of faith; and in her own phrase,[2] she felt herself a second Lady Godiva, going in the daylight down the public way, naked, not in body but in soul, for the good cause. She was convinced that her ride was necessary; for men would remain blind to the glory of Whitman's message until a woman dared the shame and held its glory up to them. And what she did, she did less for men than for their wives and mothers, upon whom the shadow of their shame-in-themselves had fallen.

Mr. Rossetti has described[3] her as a woman of good port, in fullest possession of herself, never fidgetty, and

[1] See *supra*, 225-7. [2] Gilchrist, 190. [3] *Ib.*, Preface.

ver taken unawares; warm-hearted and courageous, th full, dark, liquid eyes, which were at the same time ve with humour and vivacity, quick to detect every id of humbug, but wholly free from cynicism. Her e was not only expressive of her character, but "full arged with some message" which her lips seemed er about to utter. Her considerable intellectual force s in happy harmony with her domestic qualities, and ed her home-life with interest.

Such was the woman who, in November, 1876, at the e of forty-eight, brought her family to Philadelphia, in ler that one of the daughters might study medicine at rard College; and in whose home, near the college ounds, Whitman henceforward, for two or three years,[1] nt a considerable part of his time. The relationship these two noble souls seems to have been comparable th that which united Michael Angelo and Vittoria lonna, and they were at a similar time of life.

This, the Centennial year, was filled with thoughts and ebrations of American independence; among which may recall the Exposition in Philadelphia—where roughout the summer, Whitman had been a frequent itor—and the Centennial edition of his works. He d also celebrated the occasion by sitting for his bust a young sculptor, in an improvised studio on Chest- t Street. The weather was too hot for a coat; and his white shirt sleeves he would, at the artist's request, d his poems aloud with naïve delight, which rose to a max when the sound of applause from a group of young lows on the stairs without, crowned his efforts. "So u like it, do you?" he cried to them; "well, I rather joyed that myself."[2]

The old sad and solitary inertia was broken. Ill ough he often was, the lonely little upper room held n no longer; nor was he any more shut up within the se of bereavement. Jeff had come over from St. uis, and his two daughters spent the autumn with

[1] MSS. Diary. [2] *In re*, 370.

their aunt and uncles in Stevens Street. All through the winter Walt was moving back and forward between George's house, the Staffords farm, and Mrs. Gilchrist's. He was cheerfully busy with the orders for his pair of handsome books, which were selling briskly at a guinea a volume.

Leaves of Grass had been reprinted from the plates of the fifth edition. Its companion, *Two Rivulets*, was a "mélange" compounded of additional poems, including "Passage to India," and the prose writings of which we have already spoken, printed at various times during the last five years. "Specimen Days" was not among them, and did not appear till 1882. The title *Two Rivulets* suggests the double thread of its theme, the destiny of the nation and of the individual, American politics and that mystery of immortal life which we call death. They were not far asunder in Whitman's thought.[1]

At the end of February, Mr. Burroughs met Walt at Mrs. Gilchrist's, and thence they set out together for New York. Here, Whitman stayed with his new and dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Johnston;[2] and presented himself in his own becoming garb at the grand full-dress receptions which were held in his honour; the applause which greeted him, and the atmosphere of real affection by which he was surrounded, compensating him for the always distasteful attentions of a lionising public, eager for any sensation.

He renewed also, and with perhaps more unmitigated satisfaction, his acquaintance with the men on the East River ferries, and the Broadway stages; and, finally, he ascended the Hudson to stay awhile with John Burroughs. This pleasant holiday jaunt was not without its tragic element; his friend, Mrs. Johnston, dying suddenly on his last evening in New York.

It was in May that Mr. Edward Carpenter visited him in Camden. After a brilliant Cambridge career, he was now a pioneer University Extension lecturer in

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 270. [2] Bucke, 216, 217.

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tural sciences. But besides, or rather beyond this, a et, in whom the sense of fellowship and unity was eady becoming dominant.

In a note to his just-published preface, Whitman had oken of the "terrible, irrepressible yearning"[1] for npathy which underlay his work, and by which he imed the personal affection of such readers as he uld truly call his own. This also was the aim which derlay Mr. Carpenter's first book of verses, *Narcissus d Other Poems*, published in 1873.[2]

Their author was already familiar with *Leaves of Grass*, nich he had first read at about the age of twenty-five, d which he had since been absorbing, much as he sorbed the sonatas of Beethoven. They fed within n the life of something which was still but dimly nscious; something dumb, blind and irrational, but titanic power to disturb the even tenor of an academic e. One remarks that both Mrs. Gilchrist and he shared the full the modern feeling for science and its philoso-y, and for music.

When he visited Whitman, Edward Carpenter was irty-three; it was not till four years after this that he ve himself up to the writing of his own "Leaves," ming into his spiritual kingdom a little later in life an did Walt. In many respects his nature, and con-quently his work which is the outcome and true pression of his personality, was in striking contrast th that of his great old friend. Lithe and slender in gure, he was subtle also and fine in the whole temper his mind; sharing with Addington Symonds that ndency to over-fineness, that touch of morbid subtilty hich demands for its balance a very sweet and strenuous ul, such indeed, as is revealed in the pages of *Towards emocracy*.

He found Whitman's mind clear and unclouded after e suffering of the last four years, his perception keen

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 277 n.

[2] Tom Swan's *Edward Carpenter*, 1902, and article by E. C. in *Labour ophet*, May, 1894.

as ever.[1] Courteous, and possessed of great personal charm, he was yet elemental and "Adamic" in character. He impressed his visitor with a threefold personality: first, the magnetic, effluent, radiant spirit of the man going out to greet and embrace all; then, the spacious breadth of his soul, and the remoteness of those further portions in which his consciousness seemed often to be dwelling; and afterwards, the terrible majesty, as of judgment unveiled in him, a Jove-like presence full of thunder.

This last element in his nature was naked, ominous, immovable as a granite rock. When once you perceived it, there was, as Miss Gilchrist has remarked,[2] no shelter from the terrible blaze of his personality. But this rocky masculine Ego was wedded in him with a gentle almost motherly affection, which found expression in certain caressing tones of his widely modulated voice. While, to complete alike the masculine and feminine, was the child—the attitude of reverent wonder toward the world.

By turns then, a wistful child, a charming loving woman, an untamed terrible truth-compelling man, Whitman seems to have both bewitched and baffled his young English visitor.

Mr. Carpenter saw him at Stevens Street and Timber Creek, and again under Mrs. Gilchrist's hospitable roof. They sat out together in the pleasant Philadelphia fashion through the warm June evenings upon the porch steps; and Walt would talk in his deliberate way of Japan and China, or of the Eastern literatures. He liked to join hands while he talked, communicating more, perhaps, of himself, and understanding his companion better, by touch than by words. His mere presence was sufficient to redeem the commonplace.

His visitor had also an opportunity of noting the efficiency of Whitman's defences against the globe-trotting interview-hunting type of American woman. His silence became aggressive, and her words rebounded

[1] Carpenter (*a*). [2] G. Gilchrist, *op. cit.*; *cf.* Carpenter (*b*).

om it ; he had disappeared into his rock-faced solitude here nothing could reach him. And a very few moents of this treatment sufficed, even for the brazenmoured amazon.

During Mr. Carpenter's visit, Mrs. George Whitman, hom Dr. Bucke has described as an attractive, sweet oman, was out of health, and her brother-in-law made daily excursion down town and across the ferry to e her, and to transact his own affairs. In the heat the following July she first opened the door to Dr. ucke.[1]

He, too, had long been a student of *Leaves of Grass*, a udent at first against his own judgment, and with ttle result beyond an annoying bewilderment to his nse of fitness, and of exasperation to his intelligence. ut from the first, he felt a singular interior compulsion read the book, which he could not at all understand. s lack of all definite statement was the head and front its offending to a keen scientific mind. But now ter many years, he had come to recognise the extraordinary power of suggestion which was embodied in very page.

Dr. R. Maurice Bucke's personality was strongly narked and striking ; he had as much determination as ad Whitman himself, and his whole face is full of esolute purpose.

Born in Norfolk, in 1837, but immediately translanted to Canada, he was thoroughly educated by his ther, who was a man of considerable scholarship and minister in the Church of England.

In 1857, he crowned an adventurous youth passed in ne mining regions of the Western States, by a daring inter expedition over the Sierras, in which he was so adly frozen that he afterwards lost both feet, but his all and vigorous figure showed hardly a trace of this isfortune.

Returning to Canada, he studied medicine; and

[1] Calamus, 10 n.

eventually, in 1877, became the head of a large insan asylum at London, Ontario. Here he introduced severe notable reforms in the treatment of the patients, whic were widely imitated throughout America.

He was a keen student of mental pathology, and fo some time before his death was reckoned among th leading alienists of the continent. Certain interestin and suggestive studies of the relation which appears t exist between the so-called sympathetic nervous syste and the moral and emotional nature, but especially h *magnum opus*, *Cosmic Consciousness*, published the yea before his death (1901), reveal the direction of his don inant interest. From 1877, he was one of Whitman closest friends, and became subsequently his princip biographer.[1]

In the printed recollections of his first interview wit Whitman,[2] Dr. Bucke recalls the exaltation of his min produced by it; describing it as a "sort of spiritual in toxication," which remained with him for months, tran figuring his new friend into more than mortal statur It is another instance of the almost incredible power o the invalid's personality.

Whitman's own jottings and records of the perio testify to his increasing physical vigour. He goes, fo instance, to the Walnut Street Theatre, to a perform ance of Joaquin Miller's *The Danites*, accompanied b his friend the author.[3] In the summer of 1878, and i the succeeding year, he is again a guest both of Joh Burroughs and of J. H. Johnston.[4] On the second occa sion, he had delivered his lecture on the "Death of Lin coln" in the Steck Hall, New York; promising himse anew, that if health permitted, he would even now se forth on the lecture tour which he had so long contem plated.[5] But though, in the autumn, he made, wit several friends, an extended tour of some sixteen week

[1] MS. of Dr. E. P. Bucke, and *W. W.'s Diary in Canada*, v.
[2] Bucke, 50; *Whit. Fellowship, Memories of W. W.*, by R. M. B.
[3] MSS. Diary. [4] *Comp. Prose*, 106, 122. [5] *Ib.*, 506.

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yond the Mississippi, he did not accomplish this erished scheme.

At night on the 10th of September, Whitman and his ty left Philadelphia, westward bound. Walt de- hted in the magic speed and comfort of the Pull- an ;[1] in which, lying awake among the sleepers, he was hirled all through the first night up the broad pastoral ley of the Susquehanna, curving with its thousand dy aits about thick-wooded steeps ; and on, over ridge d ridge of the Alleghanies, till morning found them smoking Pittsburg.

Crossing the Ohio, almost at the point whence he had scended it thirty years before on that fateful southern urney, the good engine, the Baldwin, hurried them all xt day through rich and populous Ohio and Indiana. hitman was not disinclined to acknowledge a person- ty in the fierce and beautiful locomotive which he had eady celebrated in a poem full of fire and of the modern irit.[2]

They were due next morning at St. Louis, but about ghtfall their headlong flight through the broad lands as arrested. The Baldwin ran foul of some obstacle, d suffered serious damage and consequent delay. ending the third night in the city, they continued rough a beautiful autumn day, across the rolling airies of Missouri, feasting their eyes upon the wide rmlands full of the promise of bread for millions of en.

Nor material bread only. There is something in the st aerial spaces of these prairie states, their great skies d lonely stretches, which exalts and feeds the soul; mething oceanic, Whitman thought, "and beautiful dreams".[3] Central in the continent, this country d always seemed to him to correspond with certain ntral qualities in his ideal America, and to supply the ckground for the two men whose figures stood out premely above the struggle for the union, Lincoln

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 132, 149. [2] *L. of G.*, 358. [3] *Comp. Prose*, 134.

and Grant—men of unplumbed and inarticulate depths of character, and of native freedom of spirit and elemental originality of thought.

Whitman stayed for a while with friends upon the road, at Lawrence and Topeka. Many of the boys he had tended in the wards were now hale men out West, and they were always eager for sight of him; so that there were few places in America where he would not have found a hearty welcome.

He proceeded along the yellow Kansas River, through the Golden Belt, and over the Colorado table-lands, bare and vast as some immense Salisbury Plain, to Denver. In that young city he spent several days, dreaming his great dreams of a Western town that should be full of friends and strong for and against the whole world, breathing her fine air, sparkling as champagne and clear as cold spring water; falling in love with her people and her horses, and the little mountain streams which ran along the channel ways of her broad streets.

Thence, he made short trips into the Rockies; where the railroad winds among fantastic yellow buttes with steep sloping screes, and towering battlements; and the trains swing eagerly round a thousand curves to follow the bronze and amber path-finder, brawling in its sinuous ravine between the pinnacled, red, cloud-topped crags which it has carved and sundered.

Every break in the walls disclosed Olympian companies of august peaks against the high blue. Gradually the way would climb to the summit, its straightness widening, here and there, into sedgy mountain meadows closed about by keen-cut granite heights, the perfect record of laborious ages; and as the day advanced, the broad and restful light broadened and grew more serene as it shone afar on chains of snowy peaks.

Here in this tremendous mountain fellowship, with its shapes at once fantastic and sublime, its solemn joy and wild imagination, its infinite complex of form and colour suggesting vast emotions to the soul, Walt breathed his proper air and recognised the landscape of his deepest life. "I have found the law of my own

ms," he kept saying to himself with increasing con-
ion, hour after hour.[1] Like the lonely mountain
le which he watched wheeling leisurely among the
ks, he was at home in this sternly beautiful, un-
ed, unmeasured land.

'owards the end of September, he turned East again
n the mining town of Pueblo; leaving the Far West
een[2]—Utah with its Canaanitish glories of intense
and naked, ruddy, wrinkled mountains; the great
desert of Nevada; and the forest-clad Sierras looking
across their Californian garden towards the Pacific.
pping here and there with his former friends, he
id his way to Jefferson Whitman's home in St.
is, and there remained over the year's end.

his cosmopolitan Western city,[3] planted in the centre
hat vast valley which the Mississippi drains and
ers, and at the heart of the American continent,
intensely interesting to Whitman. He had an
ost superstitious love for "the Father of Waters";
many a moonlit autumn night he haunted its banks,
wharves and bridges, fascinated by the sound of the
ing water as the river flowed through the luminous
nce under the eternal stars.

hysically, St. Louis did not suit him: he was ill there
weeks together; but even so, he was happy in his
simple, human way. He went twice a week to the
ergartens, and there, for an hour together, he en-
ained the younger pupils with his funny children's
.[4] After the first moments of strangeness, and
n at his size and the whiteness of his hair, nearly
ne children quickly came to love old "Kris Kringle"
Father Christmas" as they would call him;[5] and for
part, he was as happy among little children as a
ng mother.

arly in January, 1880, he returned home. All his
ht in the West, gathered on his first journey up the
issippi thirty years before, and since accumulating

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 136. [2] *Ib.*, 140. [3] Calamus, 170-72.
[4] Bucke, 63. [5] MSS. Berenson (*a*).

from many sources, notably from the young Western soldiers he had nursed, had been confirmed by this visit.

In only one thing was he disappointed. The men had seemed, to his searching gaze, fit sons of that new land of possibility; but in the women he had failed to find the qualifications he was seeking.[1] Physically and mentally, he saw them still in bondage to old-world traditions; instead of originating nobler and more generous manners, they were imitating the foolish gentilities of the East. Whitman was very exacting in his ideal of womanhood; and perhaps it was mainly upon the ladies of the shops and streets that his strictures were passed; for there are others in that Western world who are not far from her whom he has described in the "Song of the Broadaxe"—the best-beloved, possessed of herself, who is strong in her beauty as are the laws of nature.[2]

After six months at home among his books and his friends—to whom at this time he added, at least by correspondence, Colonel Robert Ingersoll, afterwards a member of the inner circle—Whitman set out upon another journey, in length almost equal to that of the preceding autumn. Early in June,[3] he crossed the bridge over Niagara on his way to London, Ontario; and now at his second sight, the significance of that majestic scene, which thirty years before he would seem to have missed, was discovered to him.

Staying with Dr. Bucke, he made frequent visits to the great asylum, with its thousand patients, under the wise doctor's care. Walt's own family life, with the tragedy of his youngest brother's incapacity, had made the melancholy brotherhood of those whom he has beautifully described as the "sacred idiots"[4] especially interesting to him. He attended the religious services

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 146. [2] *L. of G.*, 157.
[3] *Comp. Prose*, 153-58, and *Whit. Fellowship Memo. of W. W.* (Bucke), Bucke, 48.
[4] *L. of G.*, 325.

l in the asylum; joining with those wrecked minds
n common worship, and seeing the storms of their
s strangely quieted, as though a Divine love, brood-
over all, had hushed them.[1] With many of the pati-
s he became personally acquainted, and years after-
rds recalled them by name, inquiring affectionately
r their welfare.

Whitman was in better health than usual, and in ex-
ent spirits. He loved the doctor, was happy and at
e in his household, and on the best of terms with
younger members. Among the latter, his presence
er checked the natural flow of high spirits, as does
presence of most grown-up persons: he was always
of themselves.

his, indeed, was a characteristic of Whitman in what-
company he was found, from a kindergarten to a
pany of "publicans and sinners". The spirit of
radeship identified him with the others, and he was
rofoundly himself that such identification took noth-
away from his own identity. Among the young
le of Dr. Bucke's household his fun and humour
free and natural expression; as when, for example,
moonlit evening, he undertook the burial of an
ty wine-bottle, addressing a magniloquent oration
its last resting-place to the goddess Semele.

e loved to linger at the table, telling stories after
and to recite or read aloud, when the family sat
ther in the dusk on the verandah; and sometimes,
he would take his turn in singing some well-known
. For reading aloud, he would often choose some
n of Tennyson's—"Ulysses" seems to have been his
urite.

this time also, in a secluded nook in the grounds,
ead leisurely over to himself, with the satisfaction
h Tennyson's work nearly always gave him, the
y published *De Profundis*.[2] His diary of these
ant, refreshing weeks contains many notes of the
-starred heavens and the merry birds, and the

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 154. [2] *Diary in Canada*, 10, 11.

multitudinous swallows, which would recall to his well stored mind the story of Athene and Ulysses' return.[1]

His vital force seemed to be almost unimpaired. The noble calm of his presence, indeed, made him appear ever older than he was; his fine hair was snowy white, and the high-domed crown which rose through it and grew higher and nobler with every year, gave him all claim to reverence.[2]

But, though at first sight he seemed to be nearer eighty than sixty years old, and though he was lame from paralysis, a second glance showed him erect and without a line of care or of senility upon his face. His complexion was rosy as a winter pippin, and his cheeks were full and smooth, for his heart was always young.

His host wished to show him Canada; in which country he was the more deeply interested through his settled conviction that it would presently become a part of the United States. The St. Lawrence and the Lakes, he always said, cannot remain a frontier-line as they are and should be recognised as a magnificent inland water-way, comparable with the Mississippi.

Towards the end of July[3] he set out upon this great road with his friend. Taking boat at Toronto, they descended by easy stages, stopping a night or two at Kingston, Montreal and Quebec, Whitman thoroughly enjoying all the new scenes and making friends everywhere on the way. He sat on the fore-deck in the August sunshine, wrapped in his grey overcoat, wondering at the grim pagan wildness of the lower St. Lawrence, nightly watching the Northern Lights, and appearing on deck before sunrise.

As they turned up the deep dark Saguenay and reached the mountain pillars of Eternity and Trinity, the mystery of northern river and height, with all the hold of stillness and of storm, communed with him. He saw infinite power wedded with an ageless peace, and all, however awful in its sublimity, yet far from

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 132. [2] Bucke, 49. [3] *Diary in Canada*, 41.

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ospitable to an heroic race of men; nay, by its very fulness, inviting and proclaiming the men who shall e to dwell therein.

Vith the people of Canada, as a whole, he was well ased. He liked their benevolent care for the weak infirm in body and mind; and thought them in ry respect worthy of the destiny which he believed t he foresaw — the destiny of citizenship in the Re- lic.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SECOND BOSTON EDITION

AFTER a winter in Camden, Philadelphia and th country, among friends old and new, Whitma paid his second visit to Boston. The house-tied sta tionary years of 1873 to 1876 had been succeeded by period of considerable activity, both mental and physica

On the 14th of April, he gave his lecture on th "Death of Abraham Lincoln," at the Hawthorn Rooms It was the third year of its delivery; on the two pr vious occasions it had been read in New York an Philadelphia; and he purposed thus annually to con memorate an event which appeared to him as perha the most significant of his time, an event which th American people could ill afford to forget.

In Whitman's view, as we have noted, the assassin tion of the great President had sealed the millio deaths of the war, and cemented, as could nothing els the Union for whose sake they had been given. H believed that future ages would see in it the mo dramatic moment of the victorious struggle of th nation against slavery. Rarely hereafter, in spite increasing feebleness, did he miss the occasion as th season came round; though it was often with difficul that even a small audience could be gathered for th anniversary.

Among the friends and notables whom he met Boston was Longfellow, who had already called on hi in Camden; and Whitman was warm in eulogies of t

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 171-74, 433; Kennedy, 3 n.; Bucke, 223-26.

poet's courteous manner and personality.[1] Some-ng of the burden of his first prophetic message had -ed from Walt's shoulders, and with it some of his -th against the popular poets of America. He had -sequently become better able to express his sense of real value of work like theirs when its secondary -ce was recognised.

There were others in Boston whom he also now dis-ered for the first time; notably the women of middle -d later life, among whom he rejoiced to find some of -se large, vigorous personalities whose absence he had -nented in the West.

In earlier days he had been alienated by the academic -d Puritan qualities which still gave its principal colour, -ecially when seen from New York, to intellectual -ston. But both Boston and Whitman had changed -like with the war and with the advance of time; the -vincialism of the former had given place to broader -ws, and the nobler identification of New England -h the whole interests of the nation; while the latter -s now able more generously to estimate even New -gland's shortcomings, and to recognise among its -ple that ardour and yearning for the ideal which -l always been theirs, but warmed now and humanised, he thought, by a new joyousness and breadth of -erance.[2] He felt a sunshine in the streets, which -liated from the men and women who traversed them. -is effusive ardour of public spirit set him thinking of -hens in her golden days; and for the first time he, -o had so much of the Greek in his nature, felt himself -home in Boston.

The visit was also memorable to him because it intro-ced him to the works of Millet, and, one may add, to -e emotional significance of painting as an art.[3] As I -ve before noted, New York only became a centre of -collections in comparatively recent years; and it -s probably not till Whitman had sat for two hours -fore some of the Breton artist's finest studies in the

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 173. [2] *Ib.*, 172. [3] *Ib.*, 174.

house of a Bostonian, that he recognised Painting as the true sister of music and of poetry.

It was fitting that this revelation should have come to the poet of Democracy from such canvasses as that of the first "Sower" and the "Watering the Cow". Surcharged as they are with a primitive emotion new to modern art, the works of Millet reveal the inner nature of that great Republican peasant people whom Whitman always loved.

Much of the early summer, after his return, was spent at Glendale, whither the family from Whitehorse had now removed, Mr. Stafford having taken the store on the cross-roads, some three or four miles from his old home. Directly opposite to it there stands a Methodist chapel, and often on a Sunday morning the young people would laugh as they heard Walt, in the room above, angrily banging down his window sash at the first clanging of the bell. But behind the chapel is a dense wood, and here he spent many a long, happy day.

The heat of July was, as usual, very trying to him, and at the end of the month he accompanied Dr. Buck on a visit to his old breezy haunts in Long Island. The farm at West Hills had passed out of the family: Iredwell Whitman, the last of Walt's uncles to hold it, seems to have sold out about 1835. In the little burying-ground there is a stone erected to his daughter Mahala, who died eight years later.[1]

While in Boston he seems to have received propositions from the firm of Osgood and Company for the publication of a definitive edition of the *Leaves*, and about the beginning of September, after completing his manuscript at the home of his friends, Mr. and (the second) Mrs. Johnston, at Mott Haven, New York,[2] he settled down in the New England capital to read proofs and to enjoy himself.

He stayed at the Bullfinch, close to Bowdoin Square, and frequented the water-side.[3] Often he would take

[1] MSS. Wallace. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 176-80. [3] Kennedy, 3 n.

e cars which run through South Boston to City Point, nose pebbly, crescent beach is lapped forever by the llantic ripple. And to this place the lover of Whitman y well follow, for it holds memories of him.

On a summer's evening, after dark, thousands of young ostonians gather under the lamps, laughing and talking d listening to the band; but, beyond the zone of lights d mirth and music, one finds oneself at once in a stical solitude. A long bridge or pier stretches out o the bay, terminating in Castle Island and grim Fort dependence; and wandering out along it, surrounded every direction by distant lights, the illuminated dome the State House rising afar in the west, and lights oving to and fro mysteriously upon the water, you l the night wind blowing cool across the black gulf of as it carries to you distant sounds of merry-making. ry far away they seem, thus encircled in mysterious aces which are peopled by sea voices and the stars. e light surf makes upon the shore its constant and de- ious murmur—"death, death, death, death, death"[1]— d the lights and the noises of life, with all its passing ow, are mysteriously related in that murmur to the ne, star-lighted silence of eternity.

Whitman walked daily on the Common, watching the endly grey squirrels, and becoming acquainted with h one in turn of the American elms under which he .[2] Timber Creek had deepened his knowledge of the of trees and little creatures since last he walked re with Emerson.

Emerson, too, he saw once again. Mr. Sanborn, the end at whose trial he had been present on that former it,[3] took him out through the suburbs and the wooded ntry to Concord. It was Indian-summer weather, d the meadows, that late Saturday afternoon, were sy and odorous with haymaking; all things spoke peace. Emerson came over for the evening to Mr. nborn's house, and the two old friends sat silent in e midst of the talk.

[1] *L. of G.*, 201. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 183. [3] *Ib.*, 181; *supra*, 136.

Bronson Alcott, who had brought Thoreau to Brooklyn and had once compared Whitman with Plato,[1] was of the company of illustrious and charming neighbours. The others talked, but Emerson leaned back in his chair under the light, a good colour in his old face, and the familiar keenness; and near by sat Walt, satisfied to watch him without words.

On Sunday the Sanborns and he went over to dinner. His place was by Mrs. Emerson, who entertained him with talk of Thoreau, but though he listened with interest, most of his attention belonged to his beloved host. More than ever, if that were possible, did Whitman lovingly recognise the character of his friend. He had not always been just to Emerson,[2] nor had Emerson always maintained his first generosity;[3] each had said of the other words one cannot but regret, but deeper than such words of partial criticism was the comrade love which united them.

In a letter, written immediately after this visit to his friend Alma Calder, who had recently become the second Mrs. J. H. Johnston, Whitman wrote: "I think Emerson more significant and *glorified* in his present condition than in any of his former days".[4]

The whole family was present, and sitting quietly among them Whitman could understand the natural limitations which his household entailed upon the philosopher, and acknowledging these, felt the personal bond stronger than ever. The relation of the two men had been singular as well as noble, for it was the elder who had sought the younger out and affectionately acknowledged him, and through the years that followed the advances had been made by him.

Whitman's attachment to Emerson had been one of love and reverence for his person, much more than of intellectual affinity. "I think," he wrote a few years later to his Boston friend, Mr. W. S. Kennedy, "I think I know R. W. E[merson] better than anybody else know

[1] Bucke, 100.
[2] Williamson's *Catalogue*, facsimile mem. of 187; *Comp. Prose*, 315-1
[3] Kennedy, 74-79. [4] MSS. Johnston.

n—and love him in proportion."[1] The evidence does t indicate a similar understanding on Emerson's part, ough the love between them was not unequal. To merson, as to Tennyson, Whitman remained "a great something" of undetermined character.

Whitman met many friends, new and old, upon this sit, but of the old, Thoreau had long been dead; and e strong, homely sailor's face of Father Taylor drew ston no longer to the Seamen's Bethel. Whitman mself attracted much attention as he sauntered along ong the fashionable shoppers on Washington Street; l, erect and noble, one could not pass him without tice. I have heard a lady tell how, being familiar th his portraits, she recognised him at once. Seeing n mount a car she followed, taking a seat where for veral miles she could, without rudeness, study and joy that splendid ruddy face, through which, lamp- e, there shone and glowed an inner light of spiritual stasy.

And for Whitman himself, those were happy days.[2] ne paralysis and the other ailments, more or less rious and painful, by which it had been enforced, ubled him less than usual. In his little room at essrs. Rand & Avery's printing house, or out-of-doors the woods with a fallen tree for his table,[3] he was vising the proofs of his *Leaves* with a deliberation and rticularity worthy of their final form.

For now this singular book, slowly built up through e continual inspiration, thought and labour of a arter of a century, had come to its completion, and e final plates were to be cast. Or better, we may say at for the first time it was to be really published, all her efforts in that direction having been but tentative, d more or less unsuccessful. Hitherto, despised and jected of publishers, it had issued with an innocent r from strange places, unvouched by any name which as recognised by the bookselling world. The edition

[1] Kennedy, 77.
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 180-85; Bucke, 147; MSS. Traubel.
[3] Camden, x., 113.

of 1860 is the only exception; and almost immediately after its publication, the enterprising house which guaranteed it sank into ruins.[1]

Now at last, the plan of the book had been, as far as health and strength permitted, brought to completion[2]—a plan amended since the previous Boston visit, and qualified to admit those poems which had since been written, and at first designed for a supplementary book. The cargo was filled, and the good ship ready to sail.

After a visit to the Globe Theatre to see Rossi in "Romeo and Juliet,"[3] and a supper with his co-operators, the printers and proof-readers, whose aid he was always eager to acknowledge, Whitman set out again for New York, returning home about the beginning of November. Late in the same month, the book, his vessel as he loved to think of it, set out upon its voyage; but in spite of favourable presages and a happy commencement, it was soon shrouded about in fog which only yielded to a storm.

Some 2,000 copies were sold during the winter, but early in the New Year (1882)[4] the trouble, which seemed to have passed over when the Postmaster-General decided that the book was not so obscene as to be "unmailable," began to threaten anew. The Boston District Attorney,[5] urged by certain agents of the Society for the Suppression of Vice—as though, forsooth, vice could be "suppressed"!—objected to the publication, and demanded the withdrawal of certain passages.

Whitman was hardly surprised. He had discussed these passages, or a certain number of them, with his own judgment; and it is possible that Mrs. Gilchrist's view of them had also appealed to him. In his own judgment they were right, but he seems to have been willing to omit five brief items, amounting in all to nearly a page, from the incriminated "Children of Adam" section, if it would save the edition from further

[1] See *supra*, 171. [2] Bucke, 147.
[3] MSS. Diary. [4] MSS. Carpenter.
[5] Bucke, 58, 148-53; Kennedy, 118, 119; Camden, viii., 288.

olestation.[1] These he suggested might be cut out of e plates, and replaced by other cancelling lines which would substitute. This was early in March.

But the Attorney was not to be so easily satisfied. e demanded the omission of lines in all parts of the lume, amounting to a total of eight or ten pages.[2] is, Whitman emphatically refused; and as neither rty would give way, Messrs. Osgood, without testing case further, threw up their publication on the 9th April. Their action was scathingly contrasted with at of Woodfall, the publisher of the letters of Junius, d of Mr. Murray, Lord Byron's publisher, by W. D. Connor, in a letter to the *New York Tribune*. His lignant sense of literary justice had brought him ce more to the side of his old friend, and although e former cordial relations seem hardly to have been established, the phantasmal but rigid barrier between em was crumbling away.

That Whitman was sorely disappointed by the issue the affair, goes without saying, for he had counted ch upon this edition. But District Attorneys and cieties for the Suppression of Vice were not likely to unt him.

Binding a number of copies in green cloth, he issued em himself; for Messrs. Osgood had made over to n the printed sheets and plates. At midsummer, he nsferred the latter to a Philadelphia firm—afterwards r. David McKay—who immediately brought out an tion which sold in a single day.[3] Persecution had, usual, assisted the cause, and for some months the e continued brisk, bringing Whitman at the year's d royalties to the amount of nearly £300.[4]

The Osgood disaster was not the only menace to hitman's slender income during these years. The ntes of the original Boston edition of 1860 were still

[1] MSS. Johnston. [2] Bucke, 151. [3] *Ib.*, 153.
[4] MSS. Diary; *cf.* Donaldson.

extant, having been bought at auction by a somewhat unscrupulous person, who, in spite of Whitman's protest, succeeded in putting a number of copies upon the market.

This affair was already worrying Whitman when he lay ill at St. Louis, and it was not till just before the publication of Messrs. Osgood's edition that some sort of settlement with this Mr. Worthington was effected. The author seems to have accepted a nominal sum by way of royalty,[1] and was dissuaded from seeking the legal redress for which at first he had hoped. The surreptitious sale of this spurious edition was, however, continued till his death.

Much of the winter of 1881 to 1882 had been spent at Glendale; and during the following autumn he was busy with the proofs of *Specimen Days and Collect*, a volume of about the same size as the *Leaves*, and similar in appearance, which embraced the bulk of his prose writings up to that time, including a selection from the early tales and sketches. The plan of separation adopted in the Centennial edition, in which the supplementary volume consisted of both prose and verse, was now abandoned, and the whole of Whitman's verse—with the exception of rejected passages which are numerous—was re-arranged and fitted together into the enlarged scheme of the *Leaves*.

This new arrangement is not without interest. First comes the prefatory section intended to prepare the reader, and to indicate the character of the book—it belongs largely, in order of time, to the later, more explanatory period. There follows the original poem now known as "The Song of Myself," with its assertion of the Divine and final Me—the inherent purpose and personality of the All—and its gospel of Self-Realisation. After this we have the poems of Sex—life's reproductive energy—by which self-assertion is carried out towards society; and then of comradeship and the social passion

[1] MSS. Diary.

GLENDALE STORE, 1904: WHITMAN OCCUPIED ONE OF THE ROOMS LOOKING OUT OVER THE VERANDAH

se complete the first section of the book, and, as it
, bring the individual to his or her majority.
ceforward he is a man and citizen.
here ensues a group of a dozen powerful poems—
e Open Road," "The Broad-axe" and others—in
h the life of ideal American manhood is celebrated,
the conception of America and her needs becomes
e and more complete. In "Birds of Passage," the
s are girded for noble perils, and here the middle of
volume is reached. There follows, "Sea-Drift"
"By the Road-side"; the former, a group of poems
emplative, in middle life, of the mysteries of bereave-
t and of death; the latter, full of questions, doubts
warnings, leading up to the "Drum-taps," poems
ar, of national consciousness and of political destiny.
Autumn Rivulets" are discursive and peaceful after
storm; they introduce a group, including "The
age to India," in which the unity of the world is
hasised, a unity which is declared simultaneously
Whitman with the utterance of his thoughts of
h. In "Whispers of Heavenly Death," he gives
ession to many moods, to insurgent doubts and to
mphant faith. They are followed by an Indian-
mer of miscellaneous poems, "From Noon to Starry
ht," and the volume closes with the "Songs of
ting," and the identical words which in 1860 he had
at the end.

here is little new in the book beyond the arrange-
t, and careful and final revision and readjustment of
he items to the unity of the whole. The main lines
he edition of 1860 are still followed; but since that
sion, most of the political poems have been added, and
ny of those which sing of battle and of death, with
nsiderable mass of the explanatory and philosophical
erial natural to later life.

ll this has necessarily qualified the earlier work, and
made the task of revision and adjustment necessary.
Whitman had a profound sense of congruity and
racter, and his alterations were dictated by his ori-
al purpose of creating a book which his own soul

might forever joyfully acknowledge and attest, and eve
perhaps in future ages continue.[1] The book was hi
body, projected, out of his deepest realisation of himsel
into type and paper, and it changed somewhat in a
its parts as it grew to completion and became mor
perfect.

[1] *L. of G.*, fly-leaf.

CHAPTER XVIII

AMONG THE PROPHETS

WITH the completion of the main body of his work, and before we pass to the details of his last s in Camden, a brief digression into wider fields perhaps be permissible. For Whitman's thought, gh it is very consciously his, is interestingly related hat of the preceding century and of his own, and no y of him would be at all complete which left this out of consideration. Readers who prefer to follow path of events will find it again in the next chapter.

While it is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than between the Essayist on Man and the Singer of self, they were at least agreed as to the proper sub- for human study.

hysically they were most dissimilar—Pope, a little, rmed, ivory-faced wit, all nerves and eyes; Whit- , a huge, high-complexioned, phlegmatic peasant- an. Between their thought lay the century of sseau, Goethe and Hegel, of Washington, Robe- rre and Napoleon. And their mental contrast was narked as their physical. It is clearly indicated in formal character of their work: Pope's, a mosaic of iant couplets; Whitman's, a choral or symphonic ement.[1]

Wholly lacking in the intellectual dazzle of the ustan wits, Whitman's strength lay rather in those uralistically romantic regions of the imaginative

[1] W. M. Rossetti in *Anne Gilchrist*.

world which in the eighteenth century were being re discovered by certain provincial singers, the forerunners of the Lake-poets. In the verses of Scottish poets from Ramsay to Burns; in Macpherson's "Ossian," and, finally, in the work of two men who were Londoners but "with a difference"—the soul-revealing cries of Cowper and the lyric abandonment of Blake—there was restored to English poetry that emotional quality which had been banned and ousted by the self-conscious club men of the eighteenth century.[1]

Just as the passion of high conviction returns to English politics with Burke, and to English religion with Wesley, so it finds expression once again in the rhythmical impulse of *Lyrical Ballads* and the *Songs of Innocence*. There is here a new feeling for beauty, a new sense of the emotional significance of Nature.

With the return of that enthusiasm based upon conviction, which the sceptical Deism of Pope abhorred, there came a more elastic use of metre. For the movement of poetry should vary as the pulse varies under emotion. Passion now took the place of logic in the guidance of the rhythm of thought. And as the spirit of the poet lay open to the stars, his ear caught new and ever subtler rhythms, and became aware that every impelling motive for song has its own perfect and inalienable movement. His attention passed from current standards and patterns to those windy stellar melodies unheard by the town-bred Augustan ear. All this, with much more, is revealed in the work of the new poets from Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley to Tennyson.

When Whitman came, his spirit was aware of this newly apprehended canon of poetic form. At first, he tried the medium of rhymed verses; but his were without inspiration. When self-expression became imperative he abandoned them.

For the poet, nothing can be more important than the emotional atmosphere which his verses create, for he

[1] *Cf.* Saintsbury's *Nineteenth Century Lit.*, and Stephen's *English Thought in Eighteenth Century*, ch. xii.

conveying rather moods than fancies, inspirations the soul rather than thoughts of the intelligence. ntually, it is the poet's own personality or attitude ind that most affects the world; and it seemed to itman that this must communicate itself through the llium of his thoughts by their rhythm or pulse of ech and phrasing. The manner of speaking means e almost than the matter spoken, because it is by manner, and not by the thought, that the speaker's tude toward life is most intimately conveyed.

t need hardly be said that there are rhythms which gest and evoke gladness and exaltation; others which forth melancholy; others which predispose to las- ous passions, and so forth: the thought is older than to. Whitman wished to convey to his readers all I have attempted to describe in the foregoing pages; own attitude towards life, that of a fearless, proud, smal, sympathetic, wholesome man. And he found medium among those in current use which seemed im effective for his purpose.

He had to go back to the prophets of Israel, and the thm into which their message was put anew by the nteenth century translators, to find a model. It from them, and from a study of the movements of e, but especially of speech, that he came to his own ular, and not inappropriate style. At the last de- ion, the appeal of *Leaves of Grass* is intended to be of an intimate kind of speech. It would be in- sting, in this connection, to compare Whitman's ner with that of the other writers of his period who e most distressed the purists—Browning, Carlyle, erson and Meredith—but that field is too large for o enter now.

ddington Symonds once said[1] that Whitman had nenced him even more deeply than Plato; and the aposition of the two names is as singular as it is gestive. For while the "arrogant Mannhattanese"

[1] *Camden's Compliment*, 73.

is far indeed from the founder of the Academy, there is something essentially Platonic in Whitman's attitude toward poetry. For Whitman was a moralist in the highest sense. With Plato, he dreamed always of the Republic, and that dream was the moving passion of his life.

He would—at least in his earlier years—have said with Plato, in his *Laws*, "The legislator and the poet are rivals, and the latter can only be tolerated if his words are in harmony with the laws of the State". But over the last phrase he would have laughed, adding, In my Republic the citizens think lightly of the laws!

Like Plato, he accused all the poets whom he loved best of an essential hostility to the Republic. Their whole attitude implied an aristocratic spirit, which discovered itself in their rhythms, and struck at the life of America. He would only admit such poets as are in harmony with the spirit of the Republic, and interpret the genius of America.

It was for America, then, that he made his chants: chanting them, as he hoped, in such fashion that they might forever nerve new soldiers for the battle which he saw her destined to maintain through all the ages against the ancient tyrannies of the past.

If one were to seek among modern writers for those whose genius is related to Whitman's, one would, I suppose, name first Rousseau, with his moody self-consciousness, his great social enthusiasm, his religious fervour, and his passionate perception of beauty in Nature.[1] And then, after Goethe, to whom I have several times referred in passing, one would add Byron, that audacious egoist, who, threatening the Almighty like some Miltonic Lucifer, fascinated the gaze of Europe.[2]

But Whitman had almost nothing either of the morbid sentiment or dramatic skill of the French reformer, nor had he Byron's theatrical and somewhat futile

[1] *Cf.* W. H. Hudson's *Rousseau*, 245, 246.
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 287; Guthrie, *op. cit.*, 100, 101.

rhetoric of rebellion. He was indeed very much at peace with the cosmos; his confessions are frank, but impersonal; his egoism may be Satanic in its pride, but then for him, Satan, though he remains in opposition, is really an essential factor in the government of the worlds. Temperamentally he was nearer to George Sand;[1] and, on at least one side of his nature, to Victor Hugo.[2]

It is rather as a prophet than as a literary figure that we must compare him with his great contemporaries. On this side, he was obviously related to Millet, to Beethoven and to Wagner—but it seems simpler roughly to set him over against several men of his own craft who hold a European reputation—to Carlyle, Mazzini, Emerson, Morris, Browning, Tolstoi and Nietzsche.

With Whitman, Carlyle[3] recognised the underlying moral purpose of the universe, and the organic unity or solidarity of mankind; but being himself a Calvinistic Jacobin of irritable nerves, these convictions filled him, not with a joyful wonder and faith, but with contempt and despair. He never saw humanity as the body of a Divine and Godlike soul; and though he was continually calling men to duty and repentance, he did so from inward necessity rather than with any anticipation of success. For he felt himself to be a Voice crying in the wilderness. Whitman worshipped the hero as truly as did Carlyle; but then he saw the heroic in the heart of our common humanity, where Carlyle missed it; hence his appeal was one of confidence, not despair.

For Mazzini, the word "duty" was not a scourge but a magician's wand, because he believed.[4] The Italian was not, like Carlyle, an iconoclast, but a messenger of good tidings; and if he carried a sword, it was in the name of the Prince of Peace. Like Whit-

[1] G. Gilchrist, *op. cit.* [2] Kennedy, 106, 178.
[3] *Cf.* Triggs' *Browning and Whitman.*
[4] Mazzini's *Duties of Man*, etc.; *cf.* Bolton King's *Mazzini.*

man, he was conscious of the world-life pulsing through him; in himself he found the peremptory spirit of the Republic demanding from him both blood and brain. Like Whitman also, he looked to a comradeship of young men for the regeneration of his nation; and to a poet to come for the great words which alone can unite men and nations, creating the world anew in the image of Humanity. For them both, religion was the ultimate word—a religion free from the shackles of dogma, free in the spirit of the Whole—and it was a word which the world could only receive from the poets that are to be. But while thus similar in their aspirations, they were very different in temper and circumstances. For Mazzini was a fiery, nervous martyr to his cause, a Dantesque exile from the land of his love. And yet his appeal, at least in his writings, is not so intimate as is that of the less vehement apostle of liberty.

With Emerson,[1] whose relationship to Whitman I have already discussed, there is the great contrast of temperament. For in him, passion seems to have played but little part. He is one of the noblest of those constitutional Protestants and individualists who are incapable of feeling the fuller tides of the catholic passion of social sympathy. His earnest and profound spirit seems to dwell forever in the sunny cloisters of a thoughtful solitude, far distant from life's rough and tumble.

Browning's belief that the immanent Divinity finds expression through passion, and is lost in all suppression of life;[2] and his faith in the universal plan, which includes the worst with the best, relate his thought to Whitman's. For them both, each individual life contains a part of the divine secret. It is the concrete personality of things which they seek to express, though in very different ways.

Browning astonished Carlyle by his confident cheerfulness. And his optimism was founded upon knowledge, or at least did not depend upon ignorance. Though he believed in the triumph of the divine

[1] See *supra*, 113-6, etc. [2] Triggs, *op. cit.*; Prof. Jones's *Browning*.

ement in every soul—the element of love—he recog-
sed the reality of evil, and saw life as a battle.

But not as a battle between the body and the soul, or
tween vice and virtue: the conflict, for Browning as
r Whitman, is ultimately between love as the inmost
pirit of life, and all other virtues and vices whatsoever.
ove alone "leaves completion in the soul," and solves
he enigmas of doubt.

Browning's conception of a Democracy, in which all
en should "be equal in full-blown powers," and God
hould cease to make great men, because the average
an would have become great, was set forth in some
f the earliest work of a genius as precocious in its
evelopment as that of his master Shelley.

But it would be easy to exaggerate the relationship
which I have indicated. For Browning was a cosmo-
olitan and delightful gentleman, who in his later years
ultivated music and studied yellow parchments and the
reaks of human nature, in a Venetian palace; while
Whitman was sauntering through old age in the suburb
f an American city, appearing by comparison unedu-
ated, uncouth and provincial. Appearance is, however,
leceptive, for the earth Walt smacks of is the autoch-
thonous red soil of the creation of all things.

Tolstoi, aristocrat as he is by birth and education, is
yet a peasant in his physical and spiritual character;
a Russian peasant, with the moujik's almost Oriental
stubbornness of resignation and passivity. Like Whit-
man, he is one of the people, and in some respects
he is an incarnation of Russia, as Whitman was of
America. But while there are many obvious relations
between the two men, their contrast is the more striking.
Tolstoi has the Oriental tendency towards pessimism
and asceticism. He sees the body and spirit in irrecon-
cilable conflict. And similarly he opposes forever plea-
sure and duty; so that his is a message of the endless
sacrifice of self.

An abyss of terror surrounds him, from which he
can only escape by a life of resolute and loving self-

devotion.[1] His gospel is one of escape, and is in many respects nearer in spirit to Carlyle's than to Whitman's. Tolstoi's detestation of the State is, doubtless, largely traceable to the military despotism under which he has lived.

There is a certain element of pessimism also, in the attitude of William Morris, as of Ruskin his master. But though he flings back the Golden Age into the thirteenth century, his gospel is really one of actual joy. When the citizen finds pleasure in his daily work, the State will prosper; such is his promise for the future, and his condemnation of the present. Carlyle urged men to work, in order to kill doubt, and silence the terrible questions; but Morris finds that the questions are really answered by work, if only it is done in the spirit of the artist, and in fellowship with others.[2]

Like Whitman, Morris was one who seemed to his friends almost terribly self-sufficing; he could stand alone, they thought. But strong as he seemed in his solitude, he was the poet of fellowship, of a fellowship which is man's fulfilment and immortal life. Though Whitman's view of that life was more philosophical, and his personality had a more mystical depth, the two men had much in common, especially in the aggressive and elemental masculinity of their character, and their superb joy and pride in themselves.

It would be interesting to compare Whitman's general position with that of Nietzsche; that most perplexing figure of young Germany in revolt from Hegel and all the past, from the restraint, system and conventions which threaten the liberty of the individual spirit. But Nietzsche is difficult to summarise; and time has not yet given us the perspective in which alone the general forms of his thought will become evident.

It is clear, however, that he expresses that spirit of rebellion which was so marked a feature of the first

[1] Note added to *My Confession* in 1882.

[2] *A Dream of John Ball*, and *Life of William Morris*, by J. W. Mackail.

aves of Grass; a rebellion against all bondage, even ough it call itself virtue and morality. And this, be remembered, was always a part of the real Whitman; was the side of the *Square Deific* which he has aptly med "Satan".

Between Nietzsche's "overman," jealous of every tittle his identity, and always a law unto himself, refusing bow his neck to the virtues and vices of the "weaker other"; and Whitman's self-asserting Ego, there is e same striking resemblance. One can never omit e dogma of the sacredness of self-assertion, with the iticism of Christianity which it involves, from any atement of Whitman's position. He evidently detested at plausible levelling argument, so potent for mischief the race-life which it professes to guard—that one ust be always considering the effects of example pon the foolish and perverse, and endeavouring to live own to their folly and perversity, instead of up to e level of true comradeship. Be yourself, say Whitman and Nietzsche, and do not waste your life trying be what you fancy for the sake of other people you ught to be.

Whitman's doctrine of equality is again really not unke Nietzsche's doctrine of inequality; for it only asserts he equality of individuals because of the overman latent n each one; and is different enough from the undistinguishing equalitarianism of popular philosophy.

But Whitman had the balancing qualities which Nietzsche lacked. As he said once to Mr. Pearsall Smith: "I am physically ballasted so strong with weightiest animality and appetites, or I should go off in balloon". In his case, self-assertion was not associated with mania; for it never snapped those ties of comradeship and love which keep men human, but became instead a bond for fuller and nobler relations with men and women.

The comparison with Nietzsche suggests the limits of Whitman's Hegelianism. For though he once declared hat he "rated Hegel as Humanity's chiefest teacher and the choicest loved physician of my mind and soul";

and again, that his teaching was the undercurrent which fructified his views of life,[1] yet it may well be doubted whether he ever really mastered the full Hegelian theory or realised the futility of many of those generalisations in which German idealism has been so prolific. It was because Hegel saw life, both the Me and the Not Me, as a single Whole, and found a place for evil in his world purpose, that Whitman hailed him as the one true "American" thinker of the age. But in the individualism of Nietzsche is the partial corrective of Hegel's position; and as I have suggested, Whitman would have accepted it as such.

Perhaps the foregoing very rough and ready comparisons may have thrown some light on the outstanding features of Whitman's personal message and influence. But there remains another, which I have already suggested, and to which for a moment we must return.

Whitman was essentially a prophet-mystic, and while he derived nothing from most of the men with whom his thought is related, the indirect influence upon him of George Fox the Quaker is certain.[2]

Fox's distinguishing quality was his intense personal reality; there are few more vivid figures on any page of history. This seems to be due to the fulness of life which he realised, and could focus in his actual consciousness. From this he did not derive "advanced views" but vital power. And vital power is equally and perhaps in fuller measure, characteristic of Whitman, manifesting itself by various signs in his daily life and in the phrases of his book.

In Whitman, as in Fox, this was an attractive power of extraordinary force. Around Fox it created a Society of Friends; and one cannot doubt that sooner or later a world-wide Fellowship of Comrades will result from the life-work of Whitman.

[1] *In re*, 244; *Comp. Prose*, 168, 169, 245; Camden, ix., 172.
[2] See *supra*, ch. i., ii.

Fox's "Friends"—though the meaning of the title
y originally have been "Friends of the Truth"—were
friends; united in a new ideal of communion. They
red the highest experience in common; meeting for
purpose of entering together into "the power of the
".

And Whitman also realised that life at its highest is
y revealed to comrades. His view of religion was
n less formal than that of the early Quakers; but he,
, preferred to sit in silence with those he loved, realis-
that Divine power and purpose which was one in
m.

Quakerism has not unfairly been spoken of as a
ritual aristocracy; there seems to be something
entially exclusive about it. On the other hand, it
essentially democratic and would exclude none; but
e methods necessary to its conception of truth do
t appeal to the many.

Similarly, the Fellowship of Whitman's Comrades
ust be an aristocracy of overmen—if the words can
divested of all sinister association and read in their
ost literal sense.

Whitman recognised that his inner teachings could
ly be accepted by the few, and for them he set them
rth. But for the many also, he had a message. And
ough the actual comrades of Whitman must be able
rise to his breadth of view and depth of purpose, that
rpose embraces the whole world.

For the possibility of Comradeship is implicit in every
ul; and there is none—no, not the most foolish or
erverted or conventionally good—who is ultimately
capable of entering into it. The fellowship must be
s essentially attractive as was the personality of Whit-
an himself; and if few should be chosen to be its
embers, yet all would be called.

Once realised as the one end of all individual and
cial life, such a Comradeship would transform our
stitutions and theories whether of ethics, politics, edu-
ation or religion. In a word, it would change life into
fine art. For it could be no Utopian theory, but the

most practicable of gospels. The seed has been alrea sown, and we may now await with confidence t growth of a tree through whose branches all the sta of faith will yet shine, and in whose embracing roo all the rocks of science will be held together.[1]

[1] Horace Traubel, of Camden, New Jersey, editor of *The Conservat* is the secretary of the Walt Whitman Fellowship (Internationa which meets annually in New York and issues papers. A file of th may now be consulted in the British Museum Library.

CHAPTER XIX

HE BECOMES A HOUSEHOLDER

EMERSON and Longfellow died within six months of Whitman's Boston visit; the former being ried in that graveyard at Sleepy Hollow where Walt d so recently stood by the green mounds that mark resting-places of Hawthorne and of Thoreau.[1] rlyle had died a year earlier; Carlyle who so deeply pressed his impetuous pathetic personality upon all ut he handled, and who was one of the principal erary influences upon Whitman during his later years, Emerson had doubtless been an inspiration in the rlier. And while Walt had been working on the Osgood oof-sheets, James Garfield, the friend who used to il him as he passed on Pennsylvania Avenue riding th Pete Doyle, shouting out some tag from the *eaves*, and who had now become President of the nited States, died amid the mourning of the nation. Whitman's daily life had been poorer these last two three years, since Mrs. Gilchrist's return to England, t new friends were continually added to his circle. mong these was Mr. W. S. Kennedy, who was working r awhile on one of the Philadelphia papers, and has nce published a notable collection of reminiscences and emoranda of his relations with the Camden poet.

The Christmas of 1882[2] brought him a delightful ft in the friendship of a Quaker family. Mr. Pearsall nith was a wealthy Philadelphia glass merchant, who th his wife had, till recently, been a member of the

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 183, 186. [2] MSS. Diary; MSS. Berenson (*a*).

Society of Friends. He had had a remarkable career an evangelist, both in his own country and in Europe; h eloquence and magnetic personality having been instr mental in changing the course of many lives. His w also was an active worker in the fields of religion a philanthropy ; and their home in Germantown—one the suburbs of Philadelphia most remote in every sen from plebeian Camden—became a meeting-place for m and women interested and engaged in the work of form. By this time, however, Mr. Pearsall Smith hi self, finding in human nature more forces than we accounted for in the evangelical philosophy, had wit drawn from active participation in its labours.

The elder of his daughters, Miss Mary Whitall Smi a thoughtful and enthusiastic college girl, came ba from New England, where she was studying, fired b determination to meet Walt Whitman. Her pare discovered with dismay that she had read the *Lea* at first with the consternation proper to her Quaker tra ing, but later with ardour. Respectable Philadelphia and especially members of the Society of Friends, w disposed to regard the poet as an outrageous, dangero person, who lived in a low place, among disreputa and vulgar associates. His works were classed by th with the wares of obscene book-vendors, as absolut impossible.

The parents' consternation at their daughter's reso may well be imagined. But being wise parents, th were prepared to learn ; and Mr. Smith eventually dr her over in a stylish carriage behind a pair of excelle horses.

They found Whitman at home. He descended slow leaning on his stick, to the little stuffy parlour wh they were waiting ; and with a kindly, affectionate amu ment received the girl's homage. Her father imme ately and impulsively asked the old man to drive ba and spend the night with them. This was the spo taneous kind of hospitality which most delighted Wa and after a moment's hesitation, in which he weigh the matter, he decided in favour of his new friends a

MARY WHITALL SMITH (MRS. BERENSON) IN 1884

r excellent equipage. His sister-in-law quickly luced the boots and other necessaries, and they set h. Whitman loved to drive and to be driven, and as sat on the back seat by his adoring young friend, heartily enjoyed the whole situation. It was indeed ugh to warm an old man's heart.

fter listening to her avowals, he recommended Miss th to study Emerson and Thoreau, but was evidently pleased with her praise. Genuine devotion he ays accepted.

He stayed a couple of days on this occasion; delighting in long drives along the Wissahickon Creek, and wing himself very much at home among the young ple of the household.

rom this time on, and until the family left for England in 1886, he was their frequent visitor; and in r years—while reverently remembering Mrs. Gilist, who died in 1885—he came to speak of Mary nitall Smith as his "staunchest living woman friend". s letters to her father also are evidences of a close imacy between the two men. Thus it seems permissible to speak here at greater length than usual of their ations, which serve besides to illustrate others not s affectionate.

Often during the college vacations, when the house s filled with merry young folk, Whitman would sit the hall to catch the sounds of their laughter, enced by a little distance; or from his corner, leaning on his stick, he would look on for hours together ile they danced. Spirits ran high on these occans, and all the higher for his smiling presence. He oyed everything, and not least the wholesome inient love-making which he was quick to notice, and courage.

Often he was full of fun; and still, as in the old days, sang gaily as he splashed about in his bath, a dated group of young people listening on the landing hout to the strains of "Old Jim Crow," some Metho- hymn, or negro melody. At night, before retiring, would take a walk under the stars, sometimes alone,

sometimes with his girl friend, who could appreciate th companionableness of silence.

He was always perfectly frank, as well as perfect courteous; if he preferred solitude he said so; and when at table, his hostess proposed to read aloud som long family letter, and asked him in an aside wheth he would like to hear it, he would smile and answer, N

He came to see them usually in his familiar gr suit; but in winter he wore one of heavier make, whi was, however, provided with an overcoat only; indoo he then put on the knitted cardigan jacket seen in son of his portraits. On one occasion, when some loc literary people were invited to meet him, he appear unaccustomedly conscious of his clothes. Uncomfor able at the absence of a coat, he tried the overcoat f awhile; but becoming very hot before the dinner w done, he beat a retreat into the hall; and there dives ing himself of the burden, returned in his ordina comfortable dress. Such incidents admirably illustra his simple and homely ways.[1]

Henceforward, though records are multiplied, t movement of Whitman's life is less and less affect by outer events, and becomes yearly more private a elusive.

There is little to record of 1883, save that short after his sixty-fourth birthday there appeared the b graphical study of Whitman by his Canadian frien Like the earlier and smaller sketch by John Burroug Dr. Bucke's volume was revised and authenticated the poet, and is an invaluable record. Though fra mentary and far from exhaustive, it is written by o of the very few who can be said to have caught t real significance of the life and personality of the auth of *Leaves of Grass*. That he fully understood Whitma neither he nor his poet friend ever suggested; but th one must add that Whitman always laughingly assert he did not by any means understand himself.[2]

[1] MSS. Berenson (*a*). [2] *Cf. In re*, 315.

WHITMAN AT SIXTY-TWO

As a result of the sales of the Philadelphia edition
ll the royalties which they brought him, the old man
s now enabled to carry a long-cherished plan into
cution.

On March the 26th, 1884,[1] he left his brother's house,
l removed to a little two-story cottage on Mickle
eet, near by. Here he installed himself, at first with
elderly workman and his wife, and afterwards under
more efficient *régime* of Mrs. Mary Davis, a buxom
w Jersey widow of comfortable presence, who brought
o the house that homely atmosphere which Whitman
d so long been seeking.[2]

Downstairs, in the little front parlour, he carried on
at remained to him of his own publishing—the old
tograph editions which he had not entrusted to Mr.
Kay; and over it, upstairs, was his bedroom, which
liked to compare with a big ship's cabin. In the
ckyard were lilacs, which he loved; and a shady
e stood in the side-walk in front.

He found his little "shack," as he called it, pleasant
d restful, and his own. He was not much worried
the rasping church choir and the bells, which
ngled cruelly loud for such sensitive hearing every
nday; nor by the neighbourhood of a guano factory,
nich was noticeable enough to the most ordinary nose.[3]
ere his friends from far and near were frequent visitors,
. Bucke, John Burroughs and Peter Doyle among
em; and in June came Edward Carpenter from Eng-
nd on his second visit.[4]

Carpenter had now issued his slender green *Towards
mocracy*, that strange, prophetic, intimate book, so
like all others, even the *Leaves* which it most re-
mbles. It was seven years since the two men had
et, and the older had grown thinner and more weary-
oking. He had not been worsted in the long struggle
th time and illness, but they had left their mark upon
s body.

[1] Kennedy, 11; MSS. Diary. [2] *In re*, 45, 141, 382; and Johnston.
[3] Donaldson, 69. [4] Carpenter (*a*), (*b*).

The visitor renewed his first impressions of th complex personality; felt again the wistful affecti mingled with the contradictious obstinacy; recognise the same watchful caution and keen perception, " certain artfulness," and the old "wild hawk look" his untameable spirit; but, beneath all, the wonderf unfathomed tenderness.

Whitman manifestly had his moods, "lumpishly i movable" at times, at times deliberately inaccessibl He took a certain wilful pleasure in denial, for t quality of "cussedness" was strong in him. And h friends admired his magnificent "No," issuing fro him naked and unashamed, just as mere acquaintanc dreaded it.

But in other moods he was all generosity, and yo knew in him a man who had given himself body, mi and spirit to Love, never contented to give less than a

Among the topics of their conversations was the Labo Movement, in which Carpenter was actively interested Whitman professed his belief in co-operation, at t same time reiterating his deeply-rooted distrust elected persons, of officials and committees. He ha lived in Washington; and besides, his feeling for pe sonal initiative, his wholesome and passionate love individuality, and its expression in every field, set h always and everywhere against mere delegates a agents. Above all things, he abhorred regimentatio officialism and interference. "I believe, like Carly in *men*," he said with emphasis. He hoped for mo generous, and, as he would say, more prudent, captai of industry; but he looked for America's realisation an ever-increasing class of independent yeomanry, wh should constitute the solid and permanent bulk of t Republic.

Regarding America from the universal point of vie as the standard-bearer of Liberty among the nations, thought of Free-trade as a moral rather than a mer economic question. Free-trade and a welcome to foreigners were for Whitman integral parts of t American ideal. "The future of the world," he wou

yy, "is one of open communication and solidarity of races;" and he added, with a dogmatism characristic of his people, "if that problem [of free interange] cannot be solved in America, it cannot be lved anywhere".

In considering Whitman's attitude towards the Social oblem, and especially the Labour Problem, whose delopment in America he had been watching since the se of the war, one must consider the conditions of s time and country.[1] The Industrial Revolution, hich is still in progress—and which in its progress is anging the face of the globe, disintegrating the old ciety down to its very basis in family life—has revealed self to us in the last generation, much more clearly an to Whitman, who grew up seventy years ago in a ew land.

We can see now that, though it may prelude a reconruction of human society and relations in all their fferent phases, it is itself destructive rather than conructive. We recognise that it does not bring equality opportunity to all, as its earlier observers had preicted;[2] but that, on the contrary, it destroys much of ie meaning of opportunity; the control of capital hich is the motive power of modern industrial life, lling more and more into the hands of a small group legatees, on whose pleasure the rest of the community nds to become dependent for its livelihood.

And we see the results of this new economic condition the character of the populations of those vast cities to which the Industrial Revolution is still gathering ie peoples of Europe and America. Among these, the pirit of individual enterprise and initiative is continually noked by the narrow range of their opportunity. Their ves become the melancholy exponents of that theory of ie specialisation of industry against which the humanirians of the age have all inveighed.

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 247, 325; *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 707.
[2] W. Cunningham, *Western Civilisation* (ii.), 258-60.

Serious as it was becoming in the New World, the Labour Question had not yet, in Whitman's time, assumed an aspect so menacing as in the Old. Even to-day the proportion of Americans engaged in agriculture is four times as large as that which rules in Great Britain; and except in the North Atlantic States, the rural population does not seem to be actually losing ground;[1] though its increase is much less rapid than that of the urban districts, into which more than a third of the population is now gathered, as against a fifth at the close of the war, or an eighth in the middle of the century. At the time of Whitman's death nearly three-quarters of the total number of American farmers were the owners of their farms; and it was in these working proprietors, with the similar body of half-independent artisans who were owners of their houses, that he placed his social faith. These were, as we have seen, the men whom he regarded as citizens in the fullest sense.[2]

In this view he was doubtless influenced by Mill, whose *Principles of Political Economy* he seems to have studied soon after its appearance in 1848. Roughly speaking, Mill had supplemented the teaching of Adam Smith that individual liberty is the one sure foundation for the wealth of nations, by describing the proper sphere of social intervention in industrial matters. His picture of the future industry—the association of the labourers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers selected and removable by themselves—has been quoted as the socialist ideal.[3]

And Mill was deeply influenced by the early Socialists. Their activity in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century was so remarkable that it must have come under the notice of Whitman. Robert Owen, intoxicated with what was perhaps a rather shallow conception of the great truth of human perfectibility, had spent

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 712; *En. Brit. Suppt.*
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 215. [3] Kirkup, *Hist. of Socialism*, 286.
[4] Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 64.

s life and wealth in unsuccessful but most suggestive cial experiments. No less optimistic were his French ntemporaries, St. Simon and Fourier.

In striking contrast with them and their doctrinaire stems, Proudhon, the peasant, who presents not a few ints of agreement with Whitman, looked forward to luntarism as the final form of society, and detested ike the theoretic elaboration and the sexual lubricity his amiable but, on the whole, unpractical com- triots.

The failure of the risings of 1848, and the succeeding riod of reaction, checked the socialist movement,[1] nd social reform was left for awhile to middle-class iberalism, with its philanthropic ignorance of the real eds of the workers; until, in the last generation, the mands of labour, the pressure of poverty and the pirations of social enthusiasts, have together furnished e motive power for a further struggle for the collec- vist ideal of "intelligent happiness and pleasurable nergy" for all.[2]

This recent movement was at first most unequally oked with an unbeliever in the brilliant, fatalistic theory Karl Marx. Marx was a year older than Whitman; s acute Hebrew intellect was trained under the Hege- an system of thought, but he was apparently destitute the finer historic sense, as well as of Hegel's idealism.[3] he humanitarian character of the social movement is ow once more sweeping it far beyond his formulas; it in Whitman's time the Marxian theory dominated ocialism.

In Long Island and New York, during the period of Whitman's youth, the social condition was, on the hole, free from serious disorders, save those incident pon growth and rapid development. The spirit of lizabethan enterprise, the practical achievement of rave and ardently conceived ideas, ruled in that demo- ratic society wherein his habit of mind was shaped, nd of which it was in large degree a natural product.

[1] Kirkup. [2] Morris and Bax, *Socialism*, 321. [3] Kirkup, 162.

Whitman's youth and early manhood were little touched by evidences of any social disease so deep-seated as to encourage ideas of revolution. It is true that the vested interests of the slave party made themselves felt in New York; but neither to him nor to the "Free-soil" party did the anti-slavery movement suggest that other change which the political title they adopted brings so vividly before the mind to-day. "Free-soil" had for him no definitely Socialistic significance.

And it was only, as we have seen, after the war that the accentuation of the labour problem brought it into prominence in the American cities. Whenever, thereafter, Whitman, leaving the comparative quiet of his own surroundings, revisited the metropolis, or wandered to some great western centre of industry, he realised dimly the progressive approach of the crisis.

The increase in the accumulation of wealth was far outrunning even the rapid increase in population; but a large proportion of this wealth was being concentrated in a few hands which threatened to control the national policy. Manufacture was facilitated by the immense influx of immigrants who swelled the dependent city populations, and these immigrants coming more and more from the south-east of Europe, that is to say, from the most backward, ignorant and turbulent nations promised by their presence to create a social problem in the North and Middle West not less acute if less extensive than that of the negro in the South.

Democracy looks with suspicion on the very poor, quoth Whitman, meaning that the poverty of the poor incapacitates them for citizenship. That, I think, is one of the great and final arguments against the policy of *laissez faire* under existing circumstances.

Things would go very well if left to themselves, say the philosophic theorist, and so even Whitman is often inclined to declare.[2] But just as the organised party of slavery, in the fifty years before the war, refused to

[1] See *supra*, 240. [2] *In re*, 379, 380; Carpenter (*b*), etc.

ave things to right themselves, so the party of property -day interferes, more or less unconsciously, with the rinciple which it so loudly proclaims. It is because of e existence of innumerable sacrosanct parchments, stoms and traditions, and all the subtly clinging fingers mortmain, that *laissez faire* remains an empty phrase. we could burn the parchments and loose the fingers, en might go free. But still for the sake of the nation's ealth the poor would need to be assisted to rise out of e helpless condition into which society has allowed nem to be thrust and held.

We have noted Whitman's hearty approval of Canada's enevolent institutions for the incapable; he fully recog- ised the duty of society toward such as these.[1] And owever hesitating his declarations on a subject which e was willing to leave to younger men, the main prin- iple of his social economy, the right of each individual o be well born, carries us far from the policy of any arty dominant to-day in our political life.

He recognised this right as far more fundamental han any secondary privilege which has been accorded o property for social convenience. And it is because his right continues to be denied to millions of future itizens, to the most serious peril of the whole Republic, nd apparently for no better reason than that its re- cognition must impede the present rate of increase in material development, that the Socialist party has arisen n America. It is safe to say that it is the only party which deliberately aims at social amelioration and the equal opportunity of all citizens; and in this respect it seeks to realise Whitman's ideal. In so far, however, as it clings to European theories, and identifies itself solely with a section of the nation, proclaiming a class-war in the interests, not of America or of Humanity, but of Labour--large, and inclusive as the term may be—it seems directly to antagonise that ideal.

Whitman would certainly be belied by the label of "Socialist"; but "Individualist" would as little de-

[1] See *supra*, 277.

scribe him. He was, and must always remain, outside of parties, and to some extent in actual antagonism to them; for while recognising its purpose and necessity, he was essentially jealous of government and control. He wanted to see the Americans managing their own affairs as little as possible by deputy, and, as far as possible, in their own persons. That, I take it, is the only form of collectivism or social life which is ultimately desirable; and all political reform will aim at its practical realisation. It depends most of all upon the simultaneous deepening of social consciousness and sympathy and increase of the means and spirit of individual independence. Only by these simultaneous developments can we hope to see established that Society of Comrades which was the America of Whitman's vision.

On the practical side of the Labour Question the old man occasionally expressed his emphatic dislike of certain sides of Trade Unionism, and probably misunderstood, as he clearly mistrusted the movement. "When the Labour agitation," he would say, "is other than a kicking of somebody else out to let myself in, I shall warm up to it, maybe." [1] And of the workman he added "He should make his cause the cause of the manliness of all men; that assured, every effort he may make is all right".

But he was a poor man himself, judged by modern standards, and he had a profoundly human and practical sympathy with the lives of the poor. He knew exactly where their shoe pinched. And thus, whatever his dislike of Unionism, he was an admirable administrator of charity. His delight in giving made him the willing almoner of at least one wealthy Philadelphia magnate, and during severe winters he was enabled to supply his friends, the drivers of the street cars, with warm overcoats. In his diary, alongside of the addresses of those who purchased his books, are long lists of these drivers friends, dimly reminiscent of the hospital lists which he used to keep in Washington.

[1] *In re*, 379. [2] MSS. Diary and Donaldson.

Walt was always an incurable giver of gifts, and ese, one may be sure, never weakened the manly dependence of their recipients. His admiration for nerous men of wealth, like George Peabody, has found place in *Leaves of Grass*.[1] For he saw that to love is th to give and to receive, and in that holy commerce th actions alike are blessed.

His interest in social work is shown in a hitherto unublished letter written about this time to Mary Whit- Smith, who had married and gone to England, and ho sent him accounts of the work being done among ne poor of the East End through the agency of Toynbee Iall. Of this he writes at noon on the 20th of July, 885: "The account of the Toynbee Hall doings and hat [is] deeply interesting to me. I think much of all enuine efforts of the human emotions, the soul and odily and intellectual powers, to exploit themselves for umanity's good: the *efforts* in themselves I mean (some- mes I am not sure but *they* are the main matter)— ithout stopping to calculate whether the investment s tip-top in a business or statistical point of view.

"These libations, ecstatic life-pourings as it were of recious wine or *rose-water* on vast desert-sands or great olluted river—taking chances for returns *or no returns* —what were they (or are they) but the theory and prac- ice of the beautiful God Christ? or of all Divine per- onality?"[2]

[1] *L. of G.*, 294; fuller in 1876 ed. [2] MSS. Berenson.

CHAPTER XX

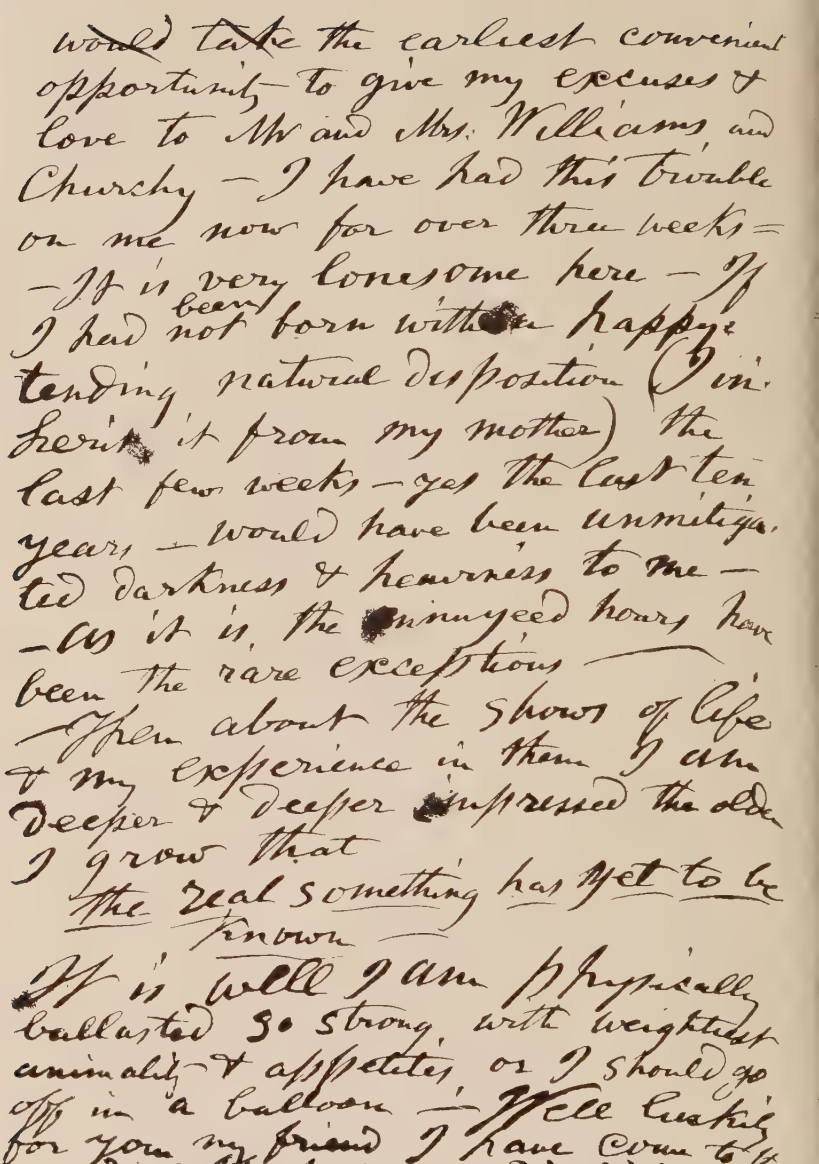
AT MICKLE STREET

THE presidential election of the autumn of 1884 brought the long Republican *régime* to an end. During the twenty-four years of its continuance the old party cries had become almost meaningless, and the parties themselves ineffective, while political life had grown increasingly corrupt from top to bottom.[1] The only practical demand of the hour was for a good government, and this required a change of party. Whitman, with a number of independent Republicans known as "Mugwumps," supported the Democrat, Mr. Grover Cleveland. With his return to the White House the South may be said to have returned to the Union, after a generation of bitter estrangement.

In the following summer Whitman had a slight sun-stroke, which rendered walking much more difficult.[2] For several months he was a good deal confined to his little house, but his friends promptly came to the rescue with a horse and light American waggon.[3]

He was overcome with gratitude for the gift—driving, as we have seen, was one of his delights—and he promptly began to make full use of his new toy. He soon disposed of the quiet steed, thoughtfully provided, and substituted one of quicker paces, which he drove furiously along the country roads at any pace up to eighteen miles an hour. Rapid movement brought him exhilaration, and he displayed admirable nerve upon emergency.

[1] *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, 651. [2] Kennedy, 17.
[3] Donaldson, Kennedy, and MSS. Diary. [4] MSS. Diary.



would take the earliest convenient
opportunity to give my excuses &
love to Mr and Mrs. Williams, and
Churchy — I have had this trouble
on me now for over three weeks =
— It is very lonesome here — If
I had been not born with a happy-
tending natural disposition (I in-
herit it from my mother) the
last few weeks — yes the last ten
years — would have been unmitiga-
ted darkness & heaviness to me —
— As it is, the ennuyeed hours have
been the rare exceptions —
Then about the shows of life
& my experience in them I am
deeper & deeper impressed the older
I grow that
the real something has yet to be
known —
It is well I am physically
ballasted so strong, with weightiest
animality & appetites, or I should go
off in a balloon — Well luckily
for you my friend I have come to the
end of the paper — W W

FAC-SIMILE OF PORTION OF LETTER FROM WHITMAN TO THE LATE MR. R. PEARSALL SMITH, MAR. 4, 1884

Though he was getting old, his capacity for enjoyment was as great as ever. He enjoyed everything, especially now that at sixty-five he was, for the first time in his life, a householder; he enjoyed his quarters, his friends, his food, and in a grim way his very suffering. "Astonishing what one can stand when put to one's trumps,"[1] he wrote on a black day. While he could hittle along the roads in his waggon, he was naturally happy enough, and he encouraged all opportunities for pleasure. He enjoyed his food, and he now relaxed some of the stricter rules of temperance which hitherto he had followed.

During periods of his life, as a young man and through the years at Washington, he was practically a total abstainer, and till he was sixty he only drank an occasional toddy, punch, or glass of beer. After that he followed the doctor's advice and his own taste, enjoying the native American wines, and at a later period, champagne.

Stories of heavy drinking were circulated by the gossips, and were tracked at last to the habits of a local artist, who imitated Whitman in his garb, and somewhat resembled him.[2] Walt's head was remarkably steady, and it need hardly be said that he was always most jealous of anything which could dispute with him his self-control.

In 1885 and several subsequent years[3] a popular caterer on the river-side, a mile or two below Camden, opened the summer season, about the end of April, with a dinner to some of his patrons, and Whitman was one of those who did fullest justice to his planked shad and champagne. For the latter he would smilingly admit an "incidental weakness".[4]

His temperance had given him a keen relish for fine flavours, and he enjoyed all the pleasures of the senses without disguise, and with a frank, childlike response to them. This responsiveness, more almost than any

[1] Kennedy, 64. [2] Donaldson, 61.
[3] Kennedy, 15, 53; MSS. Diary. [4] *In re*, 129.

other thing, kept his physical nature supple and youn
His consciousness was never imprisoned in his brai
among stale memories and thoughts whose freshne
had faded; it was still clean and sensitive to its su
roundings, and found expression in the noticeably fres
rich texture of his skin.

It was well that he should practise these simp
pleasures, for apart from his own ailments, which i
creased with time, he was still troubled with financ
difficulties. The purchase of the house had not be
exactly prudent, as it added considerably to his expense
and the success of the Philadelphia edition was not lo
continued. The royalty receipts soon dwindled to a ve
little stream, and his other earnings—though he was w
paid for such contributions as the magazines accepte
and was retained on the regular staff of the *New Yo
Herald*—were not large.[1]

Word went round among his friends, both in Ameri
and in England, that the old man was hard up aga
and a second time there was a hearty response. A fur
promoted by the *Pall Mall Gazette* at the end of 188
brought him a New Year's present of £80,[2] and individu
friends on both sides of the sea frequently sent than
offerings to him.

Some Boston admirers attempted at this time
secure for him a Government pension of £60 a yea
in recognition of his hospital work. But Whitman d
liked the plan, and though it was favourably report
upon by the Pensions Committee of the House of Repr
sentatives, he wrote gratefully but peremptorily refusi
to become an applicant for such a reward, saying qui
simply, "I do not deserve it".[4] His services in t
Attorney-General's Department seem to have been ad
quately paid, and one is glad the matter was not press
The hospital ministry could not have been remunerat
by an "invalid pension"; it was given as a free gi
and now it will always remain so.

[1] Donaldson, MSS. Diary. [2] Kennedy, 24.
[3] Donaldson, 170; Kennedy, 23, 24. [4] MSS. Kennedy.

MICKLE STREET, CAMDEN, IN 1890: THE LITTLE HOUSE ON THE RIGHT IS WHITMAN'S

From time to time special efforts were made by his nds to remove any immediate pressure of financial xiety. Whitman, who was on the one hand generous a fault, and on the other not without a pride which nsented with humiliation to receive some of the gifts stowed, manifested a boyish delight in money of his n earning, and it did his friends good to see his merri- nt over the dollars taken—six hundred of them[1]—at Lincoln lecture of 1886 in the Chestnut Street Opera use. By way of profit-sharing he insisted on pre- nting each of the theatre attendants with two dollars. The repetition of the lecture in New York the following ring, at the Madison Square Theatre, before a brilliant mpany of distinguished people, including Mr. James ssell Lowell, "Mark Twain," Mr. Stedman, and hitman's staunch admirer, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, ought him a similar sum;[2] while Colonel Ingersoll's ture for his benefit in 1890 was yet more productive, d the birthday dinners also contributed something to s funds. But the mention of these financial matters ust not be construed into a pre-occupation with the bject in the old man's later years; it troubled his iends far more than it troubled him.

After the gift of the horse and waggon, Mr. W. S. ennedy and others planned to provide Whitman with cottage at Timber Creek.[3] The idea delighted him; e craved for the pure air and the living solitude of the oods. But his health became too uncertain for the alisation of the scheme, and the remainder of his ys was spent in Camden.

The little house in quiet, grassy Mickle Street,[4] anding modestly between its taller neighbours, with e brass plate, "W. Whitman," on the door, and e mounting-stone opposite, was becoming a place of equent pilgrimage, and it has often been lovingly scribed.

[1] Donaldson, 109; Kennedy, 6. [2] Kennedy, 29. [3] *Ib.*, 54.
[4] Johnson, 18; Kennedy; Donaldson; *Comp. Prose*, 520.

During the earlier years, Walt's favourite seat w at the left-hand lower window, and there the childr would call out to him, and he would answer bright as they went by to school. The walls and mantel-sh were covered with portraits, and as to the books a papers, so long as he used the room, it was beyond t wit of any woman to keep them within bounds. B it was afterwards, when he was more confined to l bedroom, that they fairly broke loose.

He seems to have enjoyed this native disorder, f in the big, square, three-windowed upper room th occupied not only the shelves and chairs and tab but the floor itself. "His boots," says a friend—wh when Mrs. Davis was out, used to effect an entran at the window to save her host descending the stairs "his boots would be standing on piles of manuscript a chair, a half-empty glass of lemonade or whiskey todd on another, his ink-bottle on still another, his hat the floor, and the whole room filled with an indescribab confusion of scraps of paper scrawled over with his b writing, with newspapers, letters and books. He w not at all eager to have order restored, and used grumble in a good-natured way when I insisted upo clearing things up a bit for him."[1]

He liked to think and speak of the room as his den cabin; it was his own place, and bustling with his ow affairs.[2] Here were his old-time companionable book the complete Scott of his youth, and a volume of poe which he used in the hospitals; his friend Mr. E. Stedman's *Library of American Literature;* studies Spanish and German poets, and Felton's *Greece;* tran lations of Homer, Dante, Omar Khayyam, Hafiz, Saad Mr. Rolleston's *Epictetus*—a constant friend—Marc Aurelius and Virgil; with Ossian, Emerson, Tennys and Carlyle, and some novels, especially a translation George Sand's *Consuelo;* and last, and best read of a Shakespeare and the Bible. The book of Job w one of his prime favourites in the beloved volume whi was always by him in later years.

[1] MSS. Berenson (*a*). [2] *In re*, 137, etc.

Perilously mingled with the papers was wood for his ove, over whose crackling warmth he would sit in e cold weather, ensconced in his great rattan-seated, oad-armed rocker, with the wolf-skin over it; his en scent relishing the odour of oak-wood and of the inter's ink on the wet proofs which surrounded him.

Visitors usually waited in the room below for his w and heavy step upon the stairs. There the canary ng its best, as though to be caged in Whitman's house as not confinement after all; and a bunch of fragrant owers stood on the window-sill. A kitten romped out the premises, which were inhabited besides by a arrot, a robin, and a spotted "plum-pudding" dog; t to mention Mrs. Davis, and eventually her two epsons. One of these, Warren Fritzinger, who had en a sailor and three times round the world, afterards became Walt's nurse, while his brother Harry alled his first child Walt Whitman, to the old man's elight.

Among the visitors was a young Japanese journalist, ho afterwards published an amusing but ill-advised ecord of their conversations,[1] a document which seems o the English mind somewhat more injudicious than ther Whitmanite publications, which certainly do not rr on the side of reticence. After his first visit, Mr. Hartmann maintains that Walt shouted after him, come again," and this injunction from time to time he ulfilled, naïvely recording his own desperate attempts o cope with the long silences which threatened to overhelm his forlorn sallies into all conceivable regions of onversation.

The older man would sit absent-mindedly, replying ith an ejaculation or abruptly clipped phrase, or impossible sentence; but chiefly with his monosyllabic Oy! oy?" which served, with a slight inflection, for lmost any purpose of response. They say that Whitman grew garrulous, or at least less laconic, in his old ge;[2] but Mr. Hartmann hardly found him so.

[1] *Conversations with W. W.*, by "Sadakichi," 1895.
[2] Johnston, 92, 93.

One day, when Mrs. Davis was absent, they lunche together on "canned lobster" and Californian claret the kitchen. The sun shone on the grass in the litt back garden, on the pear-tree half-smothered in i creeper, and the high boarded fence; and on the hen poking in and out through the open door, and recallin the old farm life at West Hills. Whitman talked of t West, and of Denver, his queen-city of the West.

Over another similar meal, he declared his lo for the *Heart of Midlothian*, and his distaste for t gloomy poets from Byron to Poe. They discusse music among their many topics. Mr. Hartmann d clared himself a Wagnerian, but Whitman confess his ignorance of the "music of the future"; Mende sohn, of course, he knew; and in later life he had di covered Beethoven as a new meaning in music, and h been carried out of himself, as he says, seeing, absor ing many wonders.[1] But he was brought up on t Italians; it was from Verdi and his predecessors, inte preted by Alboni, Bettini and others, that he had lear the primal meanings of music, and they always retain his affection.

About the middle of May,[2] 1887, a sculptor, who h already studied Whitman in the Centennial year, ca on from Washington to Mickle Street. Mrs. Dav sided some of the litter in the parlour; and the old m sat for him there as amiably as ten years before in t improvised studio on Chestnut Street.

They talked much of the President, on a portrait whom Mr. Morse had been working. Whitman had high opinion of Mr. Cleveland, and displayed a live interest in all the personal details his friend cou supply.

During the sittings Herbert Gilchrist arrived fro England, where his mother had died of a painful disea some eighteen months earlier; and he set up his eas also. Callers came from far and near; while doze

[1] *Comp. Prose*, 151; *cf.* Camden, xxxiii. [2] *In re*, 367.

children entered with a word or message from the reet, and older folk looked in at the window.

Whitman was not very well even for him, and he iissed his solitude. But he was a delightful and urteous host. The three men often lunched together, hile several English visitors—taking Whitman on eir tour even though they missed Niagara[1]—sat down a bite of beef, a piece of apple-pie, and a cup of tea oured out by the reverend host in the hot little kitchen.

Good Mrs. Davis watched her old charge and friend ith some anxiety, as this constant stream of visitors owed in and out; but she herself rose more than qual to every emergency. She had for lieutenant a oloured char-woman, born the same day as Whitman, ho felt herself for that reason responsible in no ordin-y degree for the general appearance of the premises. he sculptor and she often found themselves in conflict. s for his clay, she disdained it along with the whole enus of "dirt". She succeeded in white-washing the elightful moss-covered fence, and would, he felt sure, ave liked to treat both him and his work in the same ummary fashion. They debated theological problems ogether, to Whitman's amusement, and he would have that Aunt Mary came out of these encounters better nan the artist.

"How does your Satan get work to do," the latter ould ask, "if God doeth all?"

"Never you fear for *him*," she retorted. "He's allers -prowlin' around lookin' fer a chance when God's back s turned. There ain't a lazy hair on *his* head. I wish," he added significantly, "I could say as much for some thers."[2]

Beside Aunt Mary other characters appear upon the ages of his friends' journals; notably a garrulous, road-brimmed Georgian farmer, who had served in the Confederate army. He was the father of a large family, hich he had brought up on the *Leaves*. As for himself, e had the book by heart, and was never so happy as

[1] *In re*, 374. [2] *Ib.*, 375, 376.

when reciting his favourite passages at Sunday Schoo
treat or Church meeting. He knew Emerson's writing
with almost equal intimacy, but complained that thes
set his soul nagging after him, while Whitman's wer
soothing to it. With Walt he declared that he loafe
and invited his soul; with Waldo, his soul became im
portunate and invited him.[1]

Meanwhile, he admitted, his farm ran more to weed
than it should. Doubtless, during his pilgrimage th
weeds prospered exceedingly; for he stayed long, an
sad to say, in the end he went away a "leetle dis
appointed". "I have to sit and admire him at a dis
tance," he complained, "about as I did at home befor
I came." Walt liked him, and was amused by his talk
but his advice, his criticism and his interpretations t
boot, were overmuch for a weary man.

There came one day a "labour agitator," who required
an introduction or testimonial of some sort from Whit
man; and he also went away disappointed. In answe
to all his loud-flowing, self-satisfied declarations, Whit
man merely ejaculated his occasional colourless mono
syllable; and when at last the discomfited man took hi
leave, the poet's absent-minded "Thanks!" was mor
ludicrously and baldly opportune than intentional.[2]

Humorous as they appeared at the time, there wa
another side to interviews of this character; for it bega
to be noised about that Whitman was quite spoilt by hi
rich friends, and had lost his interest in and sympath
with the American working-man. This was due, o
course, to a complete misunderstanding. The old fellow
who lived in his "little shack" on Mickle Street, an
dined in Germantown in his cardigan jacket, migh
have a world-reputation, but he was not forgetful o
the people from among whom he sprang and to whom
he always belonged.

At the same time it is true, as we saw, that he d
not himself profess to understand or to approve th
party organisation of labour. He was rather incline

[1] *In re*, 376, 377. [2] *Ib.*, 379.

sit in his corner and have faith, and to listen to what younger men had to say. In any case, he saw no edy for present troubles in the exploitation of class lling; he could see no help in urging the battle be- en two forms of selfishness.

Generosity and manhood were his constant watch- rds, whether for labour or for the nation. No cumstances, he would say, sitting in his room oken by the suffering of years, can deprive a hero of manhood. But he would add his conviction that Republic must be in peril as long as any of her sons re being forced to the wall, and his wish that each should have all that is just and best for him".

The sculptor and his sitter had many a long evening at together, the shadows of the passers-by cast by e street light and moving across the blind. The old an's mellow and musical, but somewhat uncertain, ice filled at these times with a confidential charm. One night he wrote out a tentative statement of his neral views, declaring for Free-trade, and for the knowledgment of the full human and political equality women with men. He regarded the world as being o much governed, but he was not against institutions the present stage of evolution, for he said that he oked on the family and upon marriage as the basis of l permanent social order. He seems to have disliked nd even condemned the practices of the American ourierist "Free-lovers,"[1] though Love's real freedom always cardinal in his teachings. Anything like a xity in fulfilling obligations, but especially the ultimate ligations of the soul, was abhorrent to him.

He was not a critic of institutions; and he accepted e work of the churches and of rationalism as alike luable to humanity. He added to his statement rious personal details; saying, half-interrogatively, at he thought if he was to be reported at all, it was ght that he should be reported truthfully. This feeling

[1] MSS. Johnston.

was undoubtedly very strong with him from the da
when he wrote anonymous appreciations of the *Leave*
in the New York press.[1]

Talk turned sometimes to the Washington days, t
Lincoln's yearning passion for the South, to the affec
tionate admiration felt by the Union veterans for th
men and boys who fought under Lee, and to the terrib
rigidity of the Southern pride. Such talk would ofte
end in reminiscences of the hospitals; and Whitma
told his friend that he would like him to cut a bas-relie
showing Walt seated by a soldier's cot in the ward
It had been his most characteristic pose, if one may us
the word; and such a study would have shown him
his own work, the work in which he was most at home
surrounded by the boys who were his flesh and blood.[2]

[1] See *supra*, 109. [2] *In re*, 390.

CHAPTER XXI

"GOOD-BYE, MY FANCY"

DURING the first years of his sojourn among them, some of the young men of Camden had founded Walt Whitman Club;[1] and year by year a group intimate friends was springing up about his own oor.

Chief of these was Mr. Horace Traubel, whose life ecame so inextricably interwoven with Whitman's last ears that he has rightly been called the old poet's piritual son. He was one of the first of Walt's Camen acquaintances. How or when they met, neither ould remember; looking back to the summer evenings hen the lame, white-haired man and the fair lad sat gether on the steps of the Stevens Street house, it eemed as though they had always been friends.[2]

Another of the group was Mr. T. B. Harned,[3] Traubel's brother-in-law, an able lawyer and lover of ooks, whose house became a second home for Whitman after the removal from Philadelphia of his friends he Pearsall Smiths. These two gentlemen, with Dr. Bucke, eventually became Whitman's executors; better han anything else, this shows the confidence which heir old friend reposed in them.

On his sixty-ninth birthday—Friday, 31st May, 1888 —his Camden friends and others met him at dinner at Mr. Harned's.[4] Two days later he was there again, and Dr. Bucke, arriving unexpectedly, was of the party.

[1] Bucke, 53 n. [2] *In re*, 111. [3] *Ib.*, 387.
[4] *Ib.*, 119; Kennedy, 31.

Walt had come in his carriage, and afterwards drov the doctor to the ferry. Thence he made his way to a point where, urging his horse into the river, he ha nothing but water and sky before him, all filled wit the sunset glory. He sat for an hour absorbing it in a sort of ecstasy.[1]

Returning home, he felt that he had been chilled and recognised intimations of a paralytic attack—th seventh—[2] as he went to bed. He quietly resisted thi alone. In the morning he had two more slight strokes and for the first time temporarily lost the power o speech.

This was Monday, and all through the week he la close to death. Dr. Bucke had returned, his friend entertaining no hopes of his recovery. But the end was not yet.

Even in the midst of the uncertainty he was deter mined to complete the work he had in hand. Every day he contrived to get downstairs, and every evening he turned over the proof-sheets of a new volume, which Horace Traubel brought with him from the printer's on his way back from the city. From this time on Traubel was his daily visitor, his faithful and assiduous aid.[3]

Slowly the old man began again to improve, but he never regained the lost ground. His friends found him paler than of old, with new lines on his face, and a heavier expression of weariness.[4] The horse and carriage were no longer of service, and had to be sold in the autumn a nurse and wheel-chair took their place. The increased confinement troubled him most of all, so that he became jealous of the tramp with his outdoor life.

Altogether, as he wrote to his friends, though holding the fort—"sort o' "—he was "a pretty complete physical wreck".[5] O'Connor, too, was now paralysed

[1] *In re*, 120; Kennedy, 32. [2] Undated news-cutting.
[3] *In re*, 119; Kennedy, 58. [4] Kennedy, 32.
[5] MSS. Carpenter.

Camden — U S America
March 6 '87 — I am feeling
fairly in health — & every thing
goes comfortably these days —
— I went over to the theatre yes-
terday afternoon — had a good ride
& a visit & performance — "Clito"
— Wilson Barret sent them for me
— enjoyed the whole affair — have not
had any letter from you now for
some time — Walt Whitman

Camden June 19 '88
3 p m
I must send you a
line breathing quite decided
favorable — I am sitting up an hour or so
a week or so — but Dr Bucke I
consider saved my life — I want
to finish my little brochure "November
Boughs" — it is abt done — Love to ye
dear friend & to Lee W W

FAC-SIMILES OF POST-CARDS FROM WHITMAN TO MRS. BERENSON, 1887-8

d near his end; the two old friends, similarly stricken, re once again exchanging greetings, though separated w by a whole continent. In O'Connor's case, however, the brain itself was also giving way. Walt llowed all the illness of him who had been in some spects his best comrade with pathetic interest, until, turning from California to Washington, the broken sh gave freedom at last to the man's fiery spirit.[1]

Whitman grew somewhat more querulous in these ter days, with the increase of pain and discomfort;[2] or from this time on one may almost say that he was lowly dying. Not that he complained or was inconiderate, but little things caused him greater irritation, though only for a moment.

Nothing is more notable in Whitman's nature than he short duration of his fits of quick-flaming wrath.[3] They flashed out from him in a sudden word, and passed, leaving no trace of bitterness or resentment behind.

An example of this is afforded by his behaviour toward he unexpected and vehement assault upon him by a ormer admirer, Mr. Swinburne. Having once acclaimed Whitman as the *cor cordium* of the singers of freedom,[4] he now consigned him to the category of the Tuppers; opining that, with a better education, he might perhaps have attained to a rank above Elliott the Corn-Law hymer, but below the laureate Southey. According to Mr. Swinburne's revised estimate, Whitman was in short no true poet; and as for his ideal of beauty, it vas not only vulgar but immoral. The attack roused Whitman to snap out, "Isn't he the damnedest simulacrum?" but that was all.[5] The affair was dismissed, and he only regretted that, for his own sake, Swinburne had not risen higher.

[1] Kennedy, 63; *Comp. Prose*, 511 n.
[2] Johnston, 88. [3] *Cf.* Calamus, 29.
[4] *Songs before Sunrise*, and *Blake, a Critical Essay*: *cf. Fortnightly*, lii., 170.
[5] Kennedy, 29; Burroughs (*a*), 54.

The rather contemptuous reference to Whitman's deficient education recalls the first criticism passed upon the *Leaves*. Their author was gravely commended to the study of Addison,[1] and to tell the truth, this has been about the last word of a large number of academic persons from that day to this. Their advice, when acted upon, nearly ruined Robert Burns; it had little effect upon Whitman, though it was not neglected.

But Mr. Swinburne's attack reminds one also of something more important even than "Addison"; the antithesis and opposition which exists between two great orders of poets, of which his friend Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Whitman himself may be taken as the types. The *Blessed Damozel* is in another world from any page of the *Leaves;* and there is almost nothing which the two poets seem to share. Mr. Swinburne did good service, in so far as he pointed the contrast; but he confused it by declaiming against the prophet, and extolling the sonneteer.

The field may not so be limited; the exile of Byron, Emerson and Carlyle from the brotherhood of poets, though proclaimed by Mr. Swinburne, can hardly be enforced. For as Whitman has suggested,[2] there are, inevitably, two kinds of great poetry: one corresponding, as it were, to the song of the Nightingale, and another to the flight of the Eagle. He himself has nothing of the infinitely allusive grace of the former, the sonnet-twining interpreters of the romantic past, the painters of subtle dream-beauties and fair women whose faces are the faces of unearthly flowers wrought purely of the passions of dead men.

But they again have nothing of his appeal to the heroic and kingly spirit that confronts the equally romantic future, grappling with world-tragedies and creating the new beauty of passions hitherto unborn. Doubtless the greatest poets unite these two orders, reconciling them in their own persons; but such are the very greatest of all time. I do not think that Whitman

[1] MSS. Wallace. [2] *L. of G.*, 425.

nself would have admitted a claim on his behalf to counted among them.[1]

The sheets he had been correcting with Traubel's aid, the crisis of his illness, were those of *November Boughs*, olume composed, like *Two Rivulets*, of prose and verse. appeared in November, 1888. Among its prose pers are sympathetic studies of Burns and of Elias cks, with an appreciation of George Fox.[2] There also many reminiscences, notably of the Old Bow- Theatre, and of New Orleans; and most interesting all, a biographical study of the origins and purpose of e *Leaves* themselves.

This *Backward Glance o'er Travel'd Roads*[3] has far more modesty in it than his earlier writings, which were cessarily occupied with self-assertion. In his old age shows himself a little alarmed at his more youthful adiness to take up the challenge which he had seen emocracy and Science throwing down to Poetry. He cognises with clearer vision than many of his friends, s own weakness in poetic technique, and the experi- ental nature of his work in poetry. But he does not retend to doubt its importance; for, as he avers, it is e projection of a new and American attitude of mind.

[1] I cannot omit some reference to the brilliant and interesting criti- m of Whitman by Mr. George Santayana, especially that contained his *Poetry and Religion*, pp. 175-87, etc., though it is somewhat out- le my proper field.

Mr. Santayana, if I understand him aright, regards all mysticism a form of spiritual loafing; he heartily discounts the more primal notions as being "low" in the scale of evolution, and sets a corre- ondingly high premium upon all that is subtle and complex. Though e seeks to be just to his victim, his lack of sympathy is clearly evi- nced in the cleverly rhetorical but quite unworthy passage (p. 180) herein Whitman is described as having "wallowed in the stream of s own sensibility, as later, at Camden, in the shallows of his favourite ook". Such phrases may be funny, but I trust the preceding pages ve shown that they are not true to the facts of Whitman's life. To ply to Mr. Santayana is obviously beyond my scope; and, even if I uld undertake the task, it would entail upon the reader many laborious ges devoted to the study of æsthetic values. For I suspect, that, hichever of us may be right, our difference goes back to the be- nning.

[2] *Comp. Prose*, 426, 439, 457, 474. [3] *L. of G.*, 433.

He is not without confidence also, that his book wi prove a comfort to others, since it has been the ma comfort of his own solitary life—and he believes it wi be found a stimulus to the American nation of his lov

The poems of the new collection are all brief an many of them are descriptive. For the rest, they a mainly the assertions of a jocund heart defying the ic cold, frost-bound winter of old-age, and waiting for th sure-following spring. Meanwhile, he enjoys the inn mysteries, and the enforced quiet of these later day these starry nights; living, as he quaintly says, in "th early candlelight of old-age".[1] To him they sometime seem to be the best, the halcyon days of all.

Not from successful love alone,
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories of politics or war;
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the evening sky,
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like freshier, balmier air.
As the days take on a mellower light, and the apple at last hangs rea
finish'd and indolent-ripe on the tree,
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days of all!
The brooding and blissful halcyon days![2]

He often reviews his past, so seemingly purposele and incoherent, and yet so profoundly urged from it source within toward the unseen goal. Still befor him, he sees endless vistas of the eternal purpose. Th secret souls of things speak to him; the restless s betrays the unsatisfied passion of the Earth's gre heart;[3] the rain bears love back with it to the mountai whence it came.[4] Everything instructs him, for he re mains eager to learn—criticism and rejection at least a much as acceptance.

Sometimes the long process of dying—the painful prolonged separating of a Body and Soul which wer more intimately wedded than are others—leaves it mark upon the page; as in a brief note where he stat simply that his solemn experiences at this period ar unlikely to occur in any other human life.[5] He fe

[1] *L. of G.*, 433. [2] *Ib.*, 388. [3] *Ib.*, 392. [4] *Ib.*, 399. [5] *Ib.*, 403 n.

WHITMAN AT SEVENTY

nself solitary even in his pain. But this was a soli-
le hallowed and supported by the Everlasting Arms.

Though often sleepless and suffering, he kept, upon
e whole, a cheery business about him, working to the
d. But silence now predominated in his days, and
s craving for it increased. In the evening, Traubel
uld come in and sit beside him, watching his face
ofiled against the evening light. He had grown to
i the old man's mood, and had learnt to say nothing.
ter an hour or two he had his reward; Walt would
d him good-bye with a smile, saying, "What a good
lk we've had". For neither of them wanted words.

Through the winter and spring of 1888 to 1889 he
mained house-tied, anchored in his big chair by the
e; "every month letting the pegs lower," he wrote
his friends.[1] But in June he got out and about in
s wheel-chair, and in August crossed the ferry to
photographed, immensely delighted at the evidences
gaiety and prosperity which met him everywhere.
merica, he would say, is laying great material founda-
ons; the sky-climbing towers will arise in good time.

The birthday dinner, which he did not altogether
pprove,[2] became this year a public function, and was
eld in the largest of the Camden halls.[3] He was
eventy, and the day was but doubtfully propitious.
However, he would not disappoint his friends, and
rrived when the meal was over.

He looked weary, as well he might, but the human
ontact and the atmosphere of love and fellowship
armed and refreshed him. The messages of con-
ratulation came from far and from many, from William
Morris among the rest. Walt wore a black coat, which
as almost unprecedented, and hid himself behind a
reat bowl of flowers, enjoying their colour and scent,
pping at his champagne, and tapping applause with
ne bottle whenever he approved a sentiment. One

[1] Kennedy, 62; MSS. Berenson, etc.
[2] MSS. Carpenter. [3] *Camden's Compliment.*

remembers how he used to detest and escape from a
lionising, and to-night, after the praises and the en
thusiasm were concluded, he said laughingly to h
nurse that it was very well, but there was too muc
"gush and taffy".[1]

That spring he had been too ill to celebrate th
Lincoln anniversary, but in the following, after a
struggle with influenza, he delivered it for the last—
the thirteenth—time.

Hoarse and half-blind, he crossed the river,[2] assiste
everywhere by willing hands, and with great difficult
climbed the long stairs to the room on South Broa
Street, where Horace Traubel's Contemporary Clu
held its meetings. Refusing introduction, he took hi
seat on the platform, put on his glasses, and got im
mediately to business, reading with a melodious voic
and easy manner.

He was over in the city again for his next birthda
celebration, and after the dinner, Colonel Ingersoll mad
a long, impassioned tribute to his friend.[3] The comrade
ship between them was strong and satisfying to both
Whitman was always in better spirits after a call fro
the colonel. "He is full of faults and mistakes," h
said once to an English friend, "but he is an exampl
in literature of natural growth as a tree"; adding, "h
gives out always from himself."[4]

Their attitude toward questions of religion was often
antagonistic, and on this occasion, after the speech
Whitman made a sort of rejoinder. While gratefully
acknowledging his friend's appreciation of *Leaves of Gras*
he pointed out that Ingersoll had stopped short of th
main matter, for the book was crammed with allusion
to immortality, and was bound together by the idea o
purpose, resident in the heart of all and realising itself i
the material universe. He turned to Ingersoll, demand
ing, "Unless there is a definite object for it all, wha
in God's name, is it all for?" And Ingersoll, shakin

[1] Donaldson, 101. [2] *Comp. Prose*, 508; Kennedy, 35.
[3] *In re*, 349-51; *Comp. Prose*, 509. [4] MSS. Wallace.

head, replied, "I can't tell. And if there is a purpose, l if there is a God, what is it all for? I can't tell. ooks like nonsense to me, either way."

From this intellectual agnosticism no argument could lodge a mind like Ingersoll's, for noble as it was, it s limited by its own logic, and to logic alone, working th the material of merely intellectual knowledge, the verse must inevitably remain a riddle. Whitman, cognising a more perfect faculty of reason, and gnisant of a field of transcendent knowledge which gersoll had never known, was able to realise a purse in this, which to Ingersoll seemed only nonsense. For the divinely creative imagination, when it is wakened, discovers in all things the meanings of eative thought. And personality, when in its supreme urs it transcends the limitations of human knowledge, nd enters the consciousness of the Whole, discovers e meaning of immortality, and the indestructibility of e soul. Such flights are naturally impossible to the destrian faculties of the mind.

Ingersoll spoke again in Philadelphia, in the same in and on the same subject, in October.[1] He had a rge audience of perhaps two thousand persons in the orticultural Hall, and Whitman was present on the latform.

Taking up his subject somewhat in the manner of 'Connor in the *Good Gray Poet*, the orator denounced e hypocrisy and parochialism of American opinion, nd proclaimed the Divine right of the liberator, genius. e justified "Children of Adam," and gave in his aderence to the theory of free rhythm which is exemplified the *Leaves*.

Alluding to the subject of their discussion after the cent dinner at Reisser's, he declared it impossible for m to make any assertion of immortality; but admitted at Hope, replying to the question of Love over the ave, might proclaim that "before all life is death, and ter death is life".

[1] "Liberty in Literature," by R. G. I., 1891; Kennedy, 66; *In re*, 2.

After the fine, but, in cold type at least, the over-flori peroration descriptive of the atmosphere of Whitman work, the applause was dying away, and the peopl rising to go, when the old poet signalled for them to b detained, and saying that he was there himself to offe the final testimony to and explanation of his writing if they would look at him and understand, he gav thanks to them and to the orator, and bade them a farewell.

The whole scene presents a curiously suggestive pi ture. And Whitman's situation was a most singula one. His friends had arranged a benefit lecture on th *Leaves* by the most eloquent eulogist in America. It true the book is not identical with Whitman, but i would be difficult to separate the *Leaves* from the man And here was the man, apparently of his own free wil receiving the eulogy and applause in person and th gate-money by deputy.

The pious Philadelphians had expressed their dis approval of the lecturer,[1] his iconoclastic fervour an agnosticism, by refusing him the use of the most com modious hall, and their opposition had encouraged Wa to stand at his friend's side. But apart from this, h presence illustrates some of the characteristics of hi nature, his child-like and sometimes terrible love o directness in the relations of life, and his frank eage ness for appreciation.

We have seen already that he could learn fro criticism, and there is a story of Dr. Bucke's which too good to omit, though it entails a slight digression It was against the awkwardness, not the severity, o his literary surgeons that he would protest with a quie humour. After one of their operations, more painfu than usual, in his slow, slightly nasal drawl, he relate how a Quaker was once set on by a robber in a wood The fellow knocked his passive victim to the ground rifled him thoroughly, and "pulling out a long knif proceeded to cut his throat. The knife was dull, th

[1] Kennedy, 38, 66.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL, FROM A PRINT

ence of the poor Quaker almost exhausted. 'Friend,' he to the robber, 'I do not object to thee cutting throat, but thee haggles.'"[1]

ut while accepting blame with serenity, he yet pre-ed praise; understanding praise above all, though n ignorant praise was hardly unwelcome. Praise directly of himself, be it understood—that often made uncomfortable;[2] but of the book, his *alter ego*, his d. For the book was, besides, a Cause, and that the lest; and even vain applauding of it sounded, in the man's ears, like the tramp of the hosts of progress; whose ranks there must needs follow, let us admit, a mber of enthusiastic fools.

Of such, certainly, Ingersoll was not one. He saw in book much of what Whitman had put there; and ecially he understood how it had been written under stress of an emotion which finds its symbol in that nner of the blue and stars, which he so happily de-ibed as "the flag of Nature".[3]

Other men have given themselves out to be a Christ, or John the Baptist, or an Elijah; Whitman, without ir fanaticism, but with a profound knowledge of him-f, recognised in a peasant-born son of Mannahatta, an erage American artisan, the incarnation of America rself. "He is Democracy," quoth Thoreau;[4] and hen he sat with a pleased indifference under the quent stream of Ingersoll's panegyric, he was only tifying anew to his whole-hearted, glad willingness give himself, body and mind, for the interpretation of nerica to her children. But none the less, it was a gular situation; and, doubtless, Whitman, who was t by any means obtuse, felt it to be such.

His last birthday dinner was held in the lower room Mickle Street after a winter of illness—"the main utments and dykes shattered and threatening to give t"[5]—broken by an occasional saunter in his wheel-

[1] *Whit. Fellowship* (Bucke), *Memories of W. W.* [2] *Cf.* Symonds, 3. [3] "Liberty in Literature." [4] Bucke, 188. [5] Kennedy, 67.

chair with the welcome sight of some four-mast
schooner on the river, and by the visits of his frien
He was still himself, however. An English admi
had recently been astounded to find the irrepressi
attractive power of the old man.[1] He was brou
downstairs, weak, after a bad day, to meet some thi
of his friends.

Walt himself started the proceedings with a toast
the memory of Bryant, Emerson and Longfellow, and
Tennyson and Whittier, living yet;[2] for the fact th
Whittier strongly disapproved of the *Leaves* in no w
separated him from Whitman's affectionate estee
Rejoicing over his big family gathering, he wistfu
remembered the absent. Doyle had not been to t
house for many months.[3] Perhaps he was a lit
jealous of new friends, and resented even being thoug
of as a stranger by Mrs. Davis. O'Connor was de
and so was Mrs. Gilchrist, and there were many othe
not less dear. Some who were far away sent th
greetings, Tennyson and Symonds among the rest; a
there were the usual warm congratulatory speeches.

The host was sometimes absent-minded, and son
times, according to the record, oddly garrulous. B
the talk about the table was often of the deepest interes
Dr. Bucke was present, and Whitman and he had
friendly bout over *Leaves of Grass*. The poet would n
accept the doctor's interpretation, or indeed, any other
saying that the book must have its own way with
readers. It was simply the revelation of the man hi
self, "the personal critter," as he would phrase it.

Dr. Bucke made some interesting reference to t
elements of evil passion which he detected in his o
friend's make-up; "the elements of a Cenci or a
Attila". And Whitman quite simply admitted that
was not sure that he understood himself.

A touch of humour was never long absent whe
Whitman was found. Some audacious devotee ask
him why he had never married; and Walt rambl

[1] Johnston, 27. [2] *In re*, 297, 327. [3] MSS. Wallace.

into an explanation, which, after alluding to the ibelungen—or somebody—'s cat with an immensely g, long, long tail to it," and again to the obscurities confront the biographer of Burns, concluded that matter in question was probably by no means dislitable, though inexplicable enough, except in the nt of his whole life.

The questioner remained standing—he was very ensiastic—and had more to follow. But as he began recite "Captain! my Captain!" a stray dog which ll entered at the open door provided a melancholy and sistible accompaniment, convulsing those present in ir own despite until the tears ran down their cheeks.[1] Finally, Whitman made an interesting political statent. He condemned as false the protectionist idea of merica for the Americans"; and asserted as the sic political principle, the interdependence of all ples, and their openness to one another for purposes exchange. The common people of all races are emrked together like fellows on a ship, he said; what ecks one, wrecks all. The ultimate truth about the man race is its solidarity of interest. Then he was ed, and calling for his stick and his nurse, he blessed em all and went slowly upstairs.

It was the last of his birthday dinners. He was venty-two, very old in body, and very weary. But was still bright and affectionate toward the friends o continued to come great distances to greet him. group at Bolton sent two representatives in the years 90 and 1891, whose records of their visits are suffused th wonder at the old poet's courtesy and loving conderation and comradely demonstrations of personal ling.[2] He was a little anxious lest his English ends should misapprehend his character: "Don't let em think of me as a saint or a finished anything," s the burden of his messages to them, always accomnied by his love.

[1] Donaldson, 91. [2] Johnston and MSS. Wallace.

He spoke warmly of the English, comparing the favourably at times with their cousins across the se and saying that they represented the deeper and mo lasting qualities of the Anglo-Saxon race; they were li the artillery of its army.[1] The welcome from Englis readers had astonished and delighted him. In 1887 contemplated a visit to Great Britain;[2] and he som times seems even to have toyed with the idea of English home. One can be more Democratic there th in America, he had once declared.[3]

Of his own later years, he said to Mr. J. W. Walla who called frequently during the late autumn of 189 "I used to feel . . . that I was to irradiate or eman buoyancy and health. But it came to me in time, th I was not to attempt to live to the reputation I had, to my own idea of what my programme should be; to give out and express what I really was; and, if I f like the devil, to say so; and I have become more a more confirmed in this."[4] Whitman has so often b accused of a self-conscious pose, that this partial ackn ledgment that such a pose had existed is full of intere an interest accentuated by the statement that he liberately abandoned it in his later years.

Talking was at this time often an effort; the hea feeling in his head, which had become more and m frequent since his first illness, increased till he compa his brain to "sad dough," or "an apple dumpling". times, when he was really prostrated, his head was "l ten devils".[5]

The portrait prefixed to his last little book, is tha some patriarch, bent under a world-weight of experie The volume, *Goodbye, my Fancy*, appeared in the winte sixty pages of fragmentary notes and rhythms of path interest. He called them his "last chirps".[6] It op on a rather deprecatory note, but is touched here there with wistful humour.

[1] MSS. Wallace; Johnston, 85; *In re*, 425.
[2] News-cutting, 1887.
[3] G. Gilchrist, *op. cit.* [4] MSS. Wallace. [5] *Ib.*
[6] MSS. Carpenter.

WHITMAN AT SEVENTY-TWO

The preface,[1] written two summers before, describes
an as moved by the sunshine to the playfulness of a
l, a kitten or a frolicsome wave. He finds a grim
tisfaction even in his present state, counting it as a
rt of his offering to the cause of the Union and
merica, for he has no doubt of its origin in the strain
the war-years. Of the war, and of his part in it, he
w sees all his *Leaves* as reminiscent.

The prose memoranda are principally memorial of old
ends, and familiar books and places, and are full of
ose generous appreciations which were a delightful
ature of his later life. Among others, are tributes to
ueen Victoria, to his friend Tennyson, and to the great
merican poets.[2]

He returns again to his gospel of health,[3] as the
essage most needed in the world to-day; a message
hich would contrast with the cry of Carlyle or of
Heine, or of almost any of the dwellers in that Europe
which he sees afar off, as a sort of vast hospital or
sylum ward. It has been his own single purpose to
rouse the soul, the essential giver of Divine health, in
is readers. His aim has always been religious; he
oresees the coming of a new religion which shall
mbrace both the feminine beauty of Christianity and
he masculine splendour of Paganism.[4]

The poems are still in the vein of *November Boughs*.
They are the utterance of certain belated elements in
his life-experience, without which his book would be in-
complete. Some review his past; others anticipate his
uture.

The most important is the poem "To the Sunset
Breeze,"[5] which is perhaps the highest expression of his
mystical attitude toward nature. The breeze brings to
his lonely, sick man, incapable of movement, the infinite
message of God and of the world; it comes to him as a
oving and holy companion, the distillation and essence
f all material things, the most godly of spirits:—

[1] *L. of G.*, 408.
[2] *Comp. Prose*, 488; *cf. L. of G.*, 402 (to Emp. William I.).
[3] *Comp. Prose*, 498, 502. [4] *Ib.*, 524, 525. [5] *L. of G.*, 414.

Thou, messenger-magical strange bringer to body and spirit of me,
(Distances balk'd—occult medicines penetrating me from head to foot)
I feel the sky, the prairies vast—I feel the mighty northern lakes,
I feel the ocean and the forest—somehow I feel the globe itself swift-swimming in space;
Thou blown from lips so loved, now gone—haply from endless store, God-sent,
(For thou art spiritual, Godly, most of all known to my sense),
Minister to speak to me, here and now, what word has never told, and cannot tell,
Art thou not universal concrete's distillation? Law's, all Astronomy's last refinement?
Hast thou no soul? Can I not know, identify thee?

One cannot doubt the feeling behind these passionate lines, or question the soul-contact which the old poet felt with the things we are complacently and ignorantly contented to regard as mere automata, moved by mechanical force. For Whitman, Nature was a soul: a soul, though strange and often seeming-hostile, yet beloved and really loving; a soul, whose infinite life is, without exception, seeking and groping after its divine source. He deliberately enumerates a catalogue of things evil to make the significance of his meaning clear.

The title of the book is related, on the last page, to a curious thought which occupied his mind at this period. While the imagination which has prompted all his poems has not been exactly himself, it has become so intimately related to him that he cannot now conceive of himself existing after death unaccompanied by it; hence his *Goodbye, my Fancy* is but a new welcome, a *vale atque ave*.[1]

There are two more poems, not included in this volume, which seem to close his work. One, the last thing that he composed, was a final greeting to Columbus, who had become in his mind a type of the poet of the future.[2]

The other, the last that I can note of these "concluding chirps,"[3] as he would call them, is a beautiful correction of the popular picture of death's valley. Before Whitman—and he of all men had a right to speak upon

[1] *L. of G.*, 422. [2] *Ib.*, 429. [3] *Ib.*, 428.

he subject, because he knew Death, as it were, personally—there spread out a very different landscape:—

the broad blessed light and perfect air, with meadows, rippling tides, and trees and flowers and grass,
nd the low hum of living breeze—and in the midst God's beautiful eternal right hand,
hee, holiest minister of Heaven—thee, envoy, usherer, guide at last of all,
ch, florid, loosener of the stricture-knot call'd life,
weet, peaceful, welcome Death.

As his book-making thus drew to a finish, he occupied himself with his own tomb. This was being erected through the autumn of 1891 among the young beeches and hickories of a new cemetery, a few miles out of Camden. It was built of grey granite into the bank, and framed after a well-known design of Blake's.[1]

At once plain but impressive, it is strikingly different from the poor little cottage in which he died. And the fact illustrates again Whitman's simple acceptance of realities. He knew that his grave must be a place of pilgrimage; and having brought the bones of his father and mother to lie beside his own, he gave all possible dignity, for the sake of the book and the cause, to this his last resting-place.

While he was thus spending a considerable sum upon his tomb, the extra expenses entailed by his prolonged illness were being met, unknown to him, by the generosity of his Camden friends. After his death, his executors were surprised to find that there was in the bank a considerable reserve,[2] amounting to several hundred pounds, available for distribution between his sisters and his brother Edward, according to the terms of his will.

In mid-December, 1891, Whitman's right lung became congested, and when Dr. Bucke arrived on the 22nd the death-rattle had already been heard, and his immediate passing was anticipated.[3]

[1] G. Gilchrist, *op. cit.*
[2] Donaldson, 28; Kennedy, 48. [3] *In re*, 413.

At Christmas, John Burroughs came over, and found such an unconquered look upon the sufferer's face that the thought of death's nearness seemed impossible.[1] From St. Louis came Jessie Whitman, her father, Jefferson, having died a year earlier; and the colonel brother, who seems now to have removed from Camden, spent at least one anxious night in the little house. Mr Johnston also came over from New York for a last sight of his old friend. But even with those nearest to him interviews became more and more difficult. He longed for the solitude and silence which their love found it hardest to give.

The wintry days at the junction of the years went by in suffering and patience. Walt was affectionately grateful for the intimate services of his nurse and of Horace Traubel; writing of the latter as "unspeakably faithful".[2] Though he was generally calm he was longing for death. He had dreadful hiccoughs, and grew colder and more emaciated. The suffering had become terrible, and the anticipation of its long continuance brought fear for the first time to his strong heart.

In mid-January, however, he rallied. The Fritzinger baby was born and called after him, and Walt had it brought in to be fondled upon his breast.[3] Colonel Ingersoll called, and his magnetic spontaneous presence and words of profound affection comforted and sustained his friend. Then, to his great satisfaction, the tenth edition of his works appeared,[4] and special copies were forwarded to his friends. He contrived to write brief notes to Dr. Bucke and to his favourite sister, telling them of the publication and of his condition.

On the 6th and 7th of February he wrote a last pathetic letter, which was lithographed and sent out to many correspondents. The "little spark of soul" which, according to his own quaint version of a favourite saying of Epictetus, had during all these months been "dragging a great lummux of corpse-body clumsily to

[1] Burroughs (*a*), 53. [2] Kennedy, 56. [3] *In re*, 417. [4] *Ib.*, 422.

HORACE TRAUBEL AT FORTY-FIVE

id fro around," was still glimmering. His friends ere ever faithful, he says, and for his bodily state, "it not so bad as you might suppose, only my sufferings uch of the time are fearful". And he added, as a last ictum, the substance of his latest public thoughts—for e read the newspapers constantly to the last—"more nd more it comes to the fore, that the only theory orthy our modern times, for great literature, politics nd sociology, must combine all the best people of all ands, the women not forgetting".[1]

His friend over-sea, Addington Symonds, was ill and lepressed,[2] and George Stafford passed away at Glenlale. He became yet more silent; looked over his etters and the journals; took and relished his brandy-punch and slept. Almost daily his pain increased, and he choking mucus. He was often in terrible exhaustion, and the long nights were almost unbearable. "Dear Walt," said his faithful friend, as he bent down and kissed him, "you do not realise what you have been to us"; and Walt rejoined feebly, "nor you, what you have been to me".[3]

All through March the restlessness and agony increased. There seemed to be no parcel of his emaciated body which was not the lurking place of pain. The stubborn determination of his nature suffered the last throes of human agony before it would surrender. Thus he learnt the lesson of death as few have ever learnt it.

Those who watched could do little but love him, and for that his dim eyes repaid them a thousandfold to the end. Without, the days were dismally bleak; snow lay heavily upon the earth, but in the big three-windowed room winter seemed still more fierce and dread.

On the night of the 24th he was moved on to a water bed, which eased him. He tried to laugh when, as he turned him upon it and the water splashed around, Warry, the sailor-nurse, said it sounded like the waves upon a ship's flanks. The thought was full of sugges-

[1] *In re*, 422 n. [2] He died soon after Whitman. [3] *In re*, 429.

tions and chimed with his own; but the mucus choked him into silence.

Next day he was terribly weak, but restful, and that night he slept and seemed easier. On the following afternoon they saw that at last he was surrendering. He smiled and felt no longer any pain.[1] Warry moved him for the last time about six o'clock, and Walt acknowledged the change with gratitude. Half an hour later, holding Traubel's hand in his, he lapsed silently into the Unknown.

It was growing dark, and the rain fell softly bearing its burden of love to the earth, and dripping from the eaves upon the side-walk. The noble ship had slipt its cable and gone forth upon "the never-returning tide".

Whitman died on a Saturday night. On the Wednesday following, from eleven to two, the Mickle Street house was invaded by thousands of people of every age and class, who had come to take a last look at the familiar face. "It was the face of an aged, loving child," said one of them.[2]

Among the rest came an old Washington comrade,[3] who was unrecognised by the policeman keeping order at the little door. No, said he, it is late, and the house is full already. With a bitter and broken heart, he was turning away bewildered from the place, when one of the others saw him and, heartily calling his name, led him in.

How many, many thoughts surged through his brain, as he looked on that dear face, and poignantly remembered again the old days! How he reproached himself for the long lapses that had crept of late, half-observed, into their intimacy! Why had he not been here these months past, nursing and caring for one who had been dearer to him than his father? Why had he left him in his last agonies to hired helpers, however kind, and to

[1] *In re*, 433, 434. [2] M D. Conway; Burroughs (*a*), 55.
[3] See *supra*, 230.

ew friends. Surely, he thought, the old are dearer—if ney be true.

He went out with the crowd to Harleigh, saw the range ceremony, and heard, without understanding nem, the fine words spoken. And then, refusing to be omforted, he escaped, walking home alone along the usty roads — alone forever now — the tears coursing own his cheeks.

But come! he would no longer waste the hours in ain reproaches. Walt, after all, understood. He had lways understood, and felt the depth of love that some- mes seeks so false an expression in jealousy. Come ow, he will live henceforward by the thought and in the nclouded love of his old Walt, once his and his now orever.

Of course, he had not understood Walt, not as these cholars, these writers and poets understood him. But ie had been "awful near to him, nights and days". And those letters of his! Sometimes he thought that n the passion of his young plain manhood, he had come nearer, yes, nearer than any other, to that great loving oul. And for my part, I am not sure that he was nistaken.

Meanwhile, in the new cemetery, out along Haddon Avenue beyond the Dominican Convent where dwell the Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary, they had buried the remains of Walt Whitman's body. The hillside above the pool had been covered with folk; and up on the beech-spray over the tomb, the first blue-bird had sung its plaintive-sweet promise of the breaking spring.[1]

In the palm-decked white pavilion, with its open sides, the words of the old poet's Chant of Death had mingled with those of the Christ and of the Buddha, and with the half-choked sentences of living lovers and friends. "I felt as if I had been at the entombment of Christ," writes one; and another murmured, "We are at the summit".

[1] Dr. Bucke in *Whit. Fellowship.*

But the last words had been spoken by Ingersoll—"I loved him living, and I love him still".[1]

"To tell you the truth," writes one who knew him intimately, "I have never had the feeling that Walt Whitman was dead. I think of him as still there, capable of writing to me at any time, and my thoughts often turn to him for his friendly sympathy."[2]

It is incredible that any being who has consciously entered upon that life of love which approves itself to the soul as God's own life, can be fundamentally affected by death. What our life is we know not, nor may we speak with any confidence of the nature of the change which we call death; but love we know, and in it, as Ingersoll rightly guessed, is the key to the riddle of mortality.

[1] *In re*, 437. [2] MSS. Berenson.

THE END

THE TOMB AT HARLEIGH CEMETERY, 1904

APPENDIX A

NOTE ON THE WILLIAMSES[1]

WHITMAN himself has described his grandmother, Naomi Williams, as belonging to the Quaker society, but upon inquiry it does not appear that she was ever a member. She was one of seven sisters; her father, Captain John Williams, and his only son, died at sea. He had been part-owner of his vessel, a schooner in the East Indian trade, plying between New York and Florida, and in 1767 he was married at Cold Spring, where his father, Thomas Williams, also a seaman, was living at the same time.

The name of Thomas Williams occurs elsewhere in the old records of this district. In 1759 one of this name, who had a son John, was at Cove Neck, having removed there from Cold Spring. This Thomas one inclines to identify with the sea-going grandfather of Naomi, and he was the son of John Williams and Tamosin Carpenter, of Musketa Cove, whose name occurs in a document of 1727. I understand that this John and his son Thomas were Quakers.

Another Captain Thomas Williams, described as "of Oyster Bay," was in 1758 first captain of the Queen's County recruits. Twenty-one years later, a John Williams and a Daniel van Velsor were serving as privates in a Long Island troop of horse, but they do not concern us.

In the absence of any definite information, and in view of the frequency of the name of Williams throughout this district —owing to the fact that Robert and Richard Williams (Welshmen) settled hereabouts in the middle of the seventeenth century — one can only surmise the cause which severed the

[1] Material supplied by Benj. D. Hicks; *cf.* Onderdonck's *Queen's County;* Thompson's History, 486 n., etc., etc.

family of Naomi Williams from the Society. It is possible that her father married out, thus forfeiting his membership, according to the old laws of the Society concerning marriage with a non-member. Or the War of Independence may have claimed his active participation and thus snapped the bond. Or, again, circumstances connected with his profession, or difficulties in attending the meetings for worship, may have caused his name to be dropped from the lists of membership. There would seem to be no doubt, however, that his daughter's sympathies remained with the Friends.

APPENDIX B

WHITMAN IN NEW ORLEANS

EDWARD CARPENTER wrote in the *Reformer*, February, 1902, p. 89: "In a letter to J. Addington Symonds (19th August, 1890),[1] he [Whitman] mentioned that he had six children. Symonds, writing to me in 1893, quoted the passage in question from this letter of Whitman's, and it runs as follows: 'My life, young manhood, mid-age, times South, etc., have been jolly bodily, and doubtless open to criticism. Tho' unmarried I have had six children—two are dead—one living, Southern grandchild, fine boy, writes to me occasionally —circumstances (connected with their fortune and benefit) have separated me from intimate relations.'"

In a letter to Carpenter, further attested in conversation with myself, Horace Traubel says: "Walt frequently in his later years made allusions to the fact of his fatherhood. That is, to me. One night, just previous to his death, I went with Harned to Walt's room, at Walt's request, to get a sort of deposition in the matter, its detail, etc., etc. . . . But he was taken sick in our presence and was unable to proceed. There the thing rested . . . he . . . could never resume the subject. He wished to have the recital 'put away in Harned's safe,' as he said, 'in order that some one should authoritatively have all the facts at command if by some misfortune a public discussion of the incident were ever provoked'. . . . He did not wish the matter broached. He felt that it would indisputably do a great injury to some one, God knows who (I do not). During Walt's last sickness his grandson came to the house. I was not there at the time. When W. mentioned the occurrence to me I expressed my regret that I had missed him. 'I wish I might see him.' 'God forbid!' [said Whitman]. . . ."

[1] Of which I have seen the original draft.

I was informed in Camden that there were *two* Southern (?) ladies, one of whom had died. There was an impression among my informants that Whitman was explicitly pledged, by the family of one if not both of these ladies, never to hint at his relationship to the children. He told Traubel that this enforced separation was the tragedy of his life. There is a love-letter extant, signed with a pseudonym, dated from New York in 1862, evidently written by a cultivated woman. If the grandchild who called at Mickle Street in 1891 was from the South—the correspondent of Symond's letter, as one may suspect—it is difficult to put the birth of his father or mother much later, I think, than 1850. It is noticeable that Whitman destroyed the references among his papers to the New Orleans visit, beyond those already printed in his prose works. In a book of memoranda referring to his early years, now in the possession of Mr. Harned, I have noted the tearing out of several leaves after the entry of his starting for New Orleans. The specification of "one living Southern grandchild," and of four children still living in 1890, suggests the probability that the second lady was not living in the South.

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